THOMAS PHILIPP
THE SYRIANS IN EGYPT 1725–1975

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THE SYRIANS IN EGYPT 1725-1975

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To
Goli, Qurrat ʿAini

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the Syrians in Egypt is a drama of many meanings touching upon different aspects of social, economic, and political life in the Middle East. In itself, their story is part of the human attempt to create conditions for a life worth living. At its most extreme this attempt involves the separation of individuals or whole groups from their original environment and their migration in the hope of finding or creating better conditions for life in another place. For its human drama alone the story of the Syrian migration to Egypt deserves our attention, and an attempt shall be made here to reconstruct its history. The role of the Syrian emigrants in the history of modern Egypt, as individuals or as a group, also merits a more serious evaluation than the commonplace and often misleading clichés which have been the standard commentaries on this migration.

But the value of an analytical study of the history of the Syrian migration is of a far wider scope, for it illuminates and at the same time formulates some of the major issues the changing societies of the Middle East have to face.

The persistence of traditional patterns of social integration and the manner and timing of the emergence of new ones are not merely academic questions for the historian who wants to organize his history into neat periods; these matters touch upon the very existence of the contemporary states and their societies in the Middle East. With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire the attempt to restructure society – usually on a national basis – became a major theme of Middle Eastern history. The Ottoman Empire had found its ultimate source of legitimacy in religion. Its society consisted of only loosely integrated, heterogeneous religious, ethnic, occupational, and territorial groups which enjoyed varying degrees of internal autonomy. Education and religious authority, but also tax collection and maintenance of law and order on a local level were among the major functions such groups could fulfill.

The rise of nationalism in the Middle East during the 19th century began to challenge this social and political order and tried to supplant its heterogeneous, decentralized structure with a number of culturally homogeneous, socially integrated, and administratively centralized secular nation-states. Newly emerging economic patterns often tended to support such developments. Certain types of groups which traditionally had enjoyed a large degree of internal autonomy, such as guilds, city quarters or neighborhoods with their own Shaikhs, village communities, or tribal formations, have indeed witnessed a profound loss of such autonomy which has usually been replaced by a centrally controlled administration. In the case of religious minorities, whose rights to internal autonomy were much more firmly anchored in the law, the integration into the general society has been much more hesitant if it occurred at all.

One of the assumptions guiding protagonists of a national political and social order was that religious loyalties and the divisiveness they engendered could be successfully supplanted by secular national identities based on such criteria as common language, territory and the belief in a common historical experience. Such secular identity, it was argued, would unite all the members of one nation, regardless of their religious affiliations.

A glance at the Middle Eastern states of today shows that such hopes have been realized to varying degrees. Religious communities continue to exist as separate entities. Some have been socially and economically well integrated into the national society; for others integration into, and consequently loyalty to, the nation-state have remained very questionable issues. Secularization and nationalism may have eased intercommunal relationships but they certainly did not eliminate the communities as frameworks of social relations and identity.

For a study of the continuity and transformation of autonomous communities, formation of new communities, and social integration into national societies, the history of the Syrians in Egypt provides especially rich materials. A major part of the immigrants were, indeed, in the process of forming a new religious community at the very time of their migration. Migration raised for the Greek Catholic immigrants not only the question of relations with the Egyptian society but also offered them the opportunity to create fairly unhampered their own communal structures.

The Syrian immigrant had to deal principally with three overlapping as well as contradictory levels of social integration and identity. As a member of a particular religious community he clearly defined his overall place in society and his loyalties in a traditional manner. As an immigrant he shared with other immigrants, regardless of religious affiliation, many of the same social and economic conditions in a foreign environment. Symbolic expression of this common experience, especially an emphasis on common territorial origin, maintained among the immigrants a specifically Syrian identity. With the spread of secularism this could potentially lead to an identification with Syrian nationalism. On the other hand, it could be argued that later generations of immigrants, born in Egypt and possessing Egyptian citizenship, would come to identify themselves with and integrate with Egyptian society. The Arabic language, shared in common by immigrants and the absorbing culture, could greatly facilitate integration.

Similarily, Egyptian society could perceive of the immigrants in terms of religion; members of the same *umma* if they were Muslims, *dhimmis* if they were not. It could also see all of them as outsiders, *dukhala'*, who had no place in the Egyptian national structure. Or it could, on the other hand, accept the immigrants, or at least their descendents, as an integral part of Egyptian society.

With time, all these levels of social integration and cultural and political identification would emerge; only the emphasis would shift with circumstances.

Religion, secularism, and nationalism were the parameters by which the perception and self-perception of the Syrians in Egypt would be determined. In which ways they would come to apply depended in turn to a great extent upon the social,

economic and cultural role the immigrants were to play in Egypt. This in itself was largely dependent upon the circumstances and motivations of migration.

Migration is the result of a complex interplay of forces: economic, social, or ideological pressures in the land of origin; existing means and possibilities for the actual migration; and attractions and opportunities – perceived or real – in the land of destination. These are the most important factors determining the social character and geographic direction of migration and the eventual place of the immigrant in the new society.

Relative conditions in Syria and Egypt are at the center of this study of the Syrian migration to Egypt during the last 250 years. These push-and-pull factors determined the socio-economic origin of the immigrants, their religious and cultural orientation and eventually their willingness or ability to integrate into Egyptian society.

We can, grosso modo, perceive two major waves of Syrian immigration to Egypt. The first occurred roughly between 1730 and 1780. The second began in the mid-nineteenth century and came to an abrupt halt with the outbreak of World War I. Reasons for emigration during the eighteenth century differed vastly from those prevailing during the second half of the nineteenth century, as did the conditions and motivations for integration into Egyptian society.

The first wave of immigration brought some 4000 Syrians to Egypt. They were almost exclusively members of the Greek Catholic community. The second wave of immigration allowed the number of Syrians to rise to about 35,000 by the eve of World War I. Though Greek Catholics still constituted a plurality, the Maronites and Greek Orthodox formed large communities of their own, while the rest of the immigrants were Muslims and members of smaller Christian communities.

Since the immigration of the eighteenth century was coeval with the development of the Greek Catholic community in Syria it will be necessary to discuss the factors which led to the genesis of this community. I shall try to show how it was in itself the result of wide-ranging political and economic changes in Syria, which permitted the development of strong autonomic tendencies in the area and opened southwest Syria to European economic penetration. In this context the Greek Catholics appear more as a new commercial class than as a religious community. Spreading their activities and control along the Syrian coast, they eventually extended them to Egypt.

I shall then analyze the political role minorities in general and the Greek Catholics in particular played in Egypt and Syria in the struggle for control between the central Ottoman government and the centrifugal forces of local autonomy.

The study of the Greek Catholic community concludes with a discussion of the consolidation of their community in Egypt, its role in the economy, and its relation to society at large.

During the reign of Muhammad 'Ali, the Syrian community in Egypt stagnated and immigration was almost nil, in spite of the frequently assumed "religious tolerance" of Muhammad 'Ali and despite his actual need for qualified labor and em-

ployees. In contrast to the much more recently arrived Greeks and Armenians the Syrians did not prosper. In analyzing the reasons for this situation three developments have to be considered: centralization of power in the hands of the ruler; trade with Europe on a previously unknown scale; and the Syrians' loss of direct access to the ruler which in the traditional patterns of politics was essential for the rise of any minority to wealth and power. During the same period the religious organizations of the various immigrant communities assumed much more concrete forms and attained, in the case of the Greek Catholics, legitimacy for the first time. The granting of legal internal autonomy to the various religious communities – intended by the Ottoman government as an emancipation of its non-Muslim subjects – constituted in fact a decisive step toward solidifying the segregation of these various groups from their social environment. In the case of the Syrian immigrants this segregation was compounded by their non-Egyptian origin.

The motivation and composition of the second immigration wave comprise the next theme. An analysis of the occupational and educational background of the immigrants and the timing of their migration leads to the conclusion that it was not so much the political unrest between 1840–1860 as the subsequent economic crisis – especially with regard to silk cultivation – which caused migration. The rapid growth of an educated class without reasonable hope for employment and careers in Syria was a further motivation for emigration. I shall also address the question of the social coherence of the immigrants in Egypt on the basis of their common origin and despite their different religious affiliations. Here especially, analysis not only of the distribution patterns of Syrian settlements in Egypt but also of occupational trends and social mobility is helpful.

In a discussion of the development of the Syrian intelligentsia and the Syrian commercial bourgeoisie and the role they played in Egypt, I shall show that the differences in educational background and economic interest of the two groups led to profoundly different experiences. An analysis of the writings of the immigrant intelligentsia shows how this educated, secularized group consciously left the framework of religious identity and community and tried to develop a new national identity which would make their acceptance by Egyptian society possible. Their involvement in Egyptian culture and political thought was strong, but when a new Egyptian educated class rose in competition the professional as well as ideological position of the immigrant intelligentsia became untenable. By the end of World War I this group had ceased to play a role in Egypt.

Tracing the economic activities of the commercial bourgeoisie helps to explain why this group never attempted integration into Egyptian society. Their insistence on autonomous identity as Christian minorities and the development of ever closer economic and cultural ties with other foreign groups in Egypt appeared to promise economic success. The continuity of the communal frameworks of loyalty and identity should not, however, be understood as a simple fossilization of these structures. On the contrary, a careful analysis of the development of the welfare organizations and their functions shows how the leadership of the communities was

secularized and the clergy came to play a role subordinate to that of the wealthy and well-established members of the commercial bourgeoisie. But secularization without nationalism, without the intent to integrate into Egyptian society, led to increased identification with European, in particular French, culture and language. An analysis of the educational policies of the communities underscores this point.

Finally, I shall discuss the almost complete exodus of the Syrian communities from Egypt in the 1960's. As an investigation of stockholding companies shows, the Syrians continued to enjoy economic success until the promulgation of the socialist laws of 1961–1962. At first sight the reason for their departure seems to lie exclusively in the nationalization of their property. This, however, would explain only the emigration of the wealthy. Nor would it account for the fact that they did not – unlike the Greeks for example – return to their land of origin, but usually went to France, Australia and North America. For a complete understanding of the departure of the Syrians from Egypt it is necessary to consider two coinciding processes – the increased Egyptianization of politics, culture and economy since World War I on the one hand and the cultural alienation and almost complete de-Arabization of the Syrians in Egypt on the other.

While the Syrians emigrated from Egypt after the implementation of the socialist laws they had in fact left Egypt, culturally speaking, at least a generation earlier.

A comprehensive history of the Syrian migration to Egypt does not exist. I have reconstructed such a history from a large variety of sources. The secondary sources, apart from general books on Egypt and Syria, consist of family histories and the travel literature of the 18th and 19th centuries, used with all the caution it demands. From different published sources[1] I have collected and reconstructed the biographies of about 500 Syrians who migrated since the eighteenth century to Egypt. These *Collected Biographies*, as I shall refer to them, have been extremely helpful and informative, though one must be aware of their limitations. They are not a representative sample of the Syrian immigrants. Rather, biographies were written about people regarded as noteworthy, be it the rich, the educated, or the powerful. To this general bias of the collection one must add the bias of the collectors of such biographies. Some are concerned only with members of their own religious community; others only with people of their own educational and professional background. Since it was usually educated and highly literary people – and not, for example, merchants – who would trouble to compile such biographies, we consequently hear much more about members of the Syrian intelligentsia than of the commercial bourgeoisie. Because of the nature of these compilations it would be pointless to use the *Collected Biographies* for any statistic exercise concerning the whole Syrian immigration. But the analysis of individual biographies provides

1 Most of the information for the *Collected Biographies* was taken from Zaidan 1922, Fahmi, Daghir, Tarrazi, Zakhura 1916, 1927. Much additional information came from family histories, articles in magazines, and other collections of biographies.

us with much insight concerning the conditions and motivations for migration, and with a sense for the immigrants' position in Egypt.

The major sources of primary materials are the French consular correspondence from Egypt and Syria, and the Patriarchal archives of the Greek Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and Maronites in Cairo and Alexandria. The correspondence and the records for the periods since Muhammad 'Ali's reign are generally still available. The registers of baptism, marriage and death turn out to be a treasure trove of demographic, social, and economic information. They can give us a numerical impression of the development of these three communities in Egypt. More than that, we often find such additional information as occupation of the father, place of origin in Syria, religion of the spouse, etc. Such information was not recorded consistently – apparently much depended on the conscientiousness of the record-keeping priest – and some registers have simply disappeared with time. This incompleteness of the records puts of course a certain limit on their informative value. Nevertheless I have been able to compile from these records in many cases fairly complete statistics. More important than gaps in the records is the fact that we have to deal, after all, with an immigrant society. Most immigrants were, for instance, baptized abroad, some already married. There was also a flow of people in and out of Egypt whose existence was probably never registered in the church records. It would, in other words, be extremely hazardous to come to conclusions about the total populations by applying any given birth rate to the birth statistics of the three communities. Yet the baptism registers (which reflect all births in the community) can provide us with very definite trends of the demographic developments, especially when combined with the information from the records of marriages and deaths.

The records of other Christian communities, such as the immigrant Jacobites and Syrian Catholics, have not been consulted. They are numerically rather insignificant and would not have changed the general picture of the immigration. More serious is the absence of any similar information on the Muslim immigrants. We will encounter the difficulty of lack of information on this group repeatedly. In a way, it reflects some of the major issues raised earlier about the immigrations. The absence of information in the Muslim case is indicative of their radically different position within Egyptian society. They did not found their own community and usually were absorbed into Egyptian society within a generation.[2]

Finally, a comment on the use of the term *Syrians* and *Syria*. For reasons of convenience and simplicity, it seems advisable to follow the traditional Egyptian use of the word *Sham*, by which the whole Arabic-speaking area Northeast of Egypt was meant – i.e., the area covered by the present states of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Syrians, *shami*, pl. *shuwam*, were people originating from this area. To

2 For instance the Egyptian historian 'Abd ar-Rahman ar-Rafi'i, scion of a famous Syrian family which during the 19th century provided several renowned Shaikhs for al-Azhar in Cairo, states in his memoirs only that the distant origin of the family is the Hejaz, without mentioning the more immediate and less mythical Syrian background (ar-Rafi'i, 6).

what degree the word is not just a technical term but implies the conceptualization of a certain group is, of course, a question which we shall have to ask ourselves repeatedly throughout this study.[3]

3 Jabarti, II, 51–52 identifies even people from al-'Arish as Syrians. *Sham* could, of course, also mean Damascus and the inhabitants of Damascus exclusively. Usually it is fairly obvious from the context which meaning of the term applies.

CHAPTER 1

SYRIAN IMMIGRATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Throughout history, geographic proximity as well as commercial and cultural relations between Egypt and Syria have sustained a small Syrian colony in Egypt. Trade and learning seem to have been the traditional reasons for Syrian emigration to Mamluk and later to Ottoman Egypt. Al-Maqrizi mentions a concentration of Syrian merchants in Khan Mansur.[1] The Mamluk Sultan Qa'itbay (1468–1495) is credited with establishing *riwaq ash-shuwam*, the quarters for Syrian students at al-Azhar, and providing for them through endowments.[2] Though we are not informed about the details of its establishment, we can nevertheless safely conclude that the Syrian students in al-Azhar were numerous and important enough to warrant the establishment of a *riwaq* of their own.

Usually, however, students came to Egypt for a few years only. Rarely did one stay in Egypt after terminating his studies. The merchants, too, were often in Egypt on a semi-permanent basis only. Their families were frequently still in Syria. Altogether the Syrians were a small group, almost exclusively Muslim, too temporary to organize or have any noticeable impact upon Egyptian society. At the same time, they were distinctly perceived as a non-Egyptian group, with their own parochial characteristics.[3]

But these traditional links do not suffice to explain the sudden waves of Syrian immigration to Egypt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They differed radically in both size and composition from the earlier Syrian immigrations. Between 1725–1780 a first migration, counting at its peak some 4,000 immigrants, consisted almost exclusively of Greek Catholics. Even more remarkable was the next wave in the nineteenth century, which increased the Syrian population in Egypt to about 35,000 by the eve of World War I. The vast majority of these were either Greek Catholics, Greek Orthodox, or Maronites; other Christians and Muslims made up the rest.

Both these immigration waves are essential to an understanding of the composition and development of the Syrian community in Egypt. In character, motivation

1 Maqrizi, II, 92; Lane, I, 421. Both quoted in A. Raymond, II, 480.

2 'Inan, 302. Surprisingly little information about the origin and history of the *riwaq* system is available. Maqrizi mentions *riwaqs* in general. Ibn Iyas is given as a source of Qa'itbay's activities, but in his lengthy treatment of Qa'itbay, which includes a list of the endowments the latter had founded, he does not mention the *riwaq ash-shuwam*.

3 ash-Shirbini, 55 reports that the Egyptians are less educated and refined than the Syrians. I am indebted to Professor G. Baer for this reference.

and time, however, they are clearly set apart from each other, and for methodical reasons it seems therefore desirable to deal with them separately.

Our statistical data for the immigration during the eighteenth century is sporadic and basically restricted to Cairo, though during this period Damiette was an equally important center of Syrian settlement in Egypt. We have to rely mainly on the very incomplete registers kept by the Franciscans for all Catholics in Cairo. Only during the last two decades of the eighteenth century did the Greek Catholic community in Egypt begin to keep its own registers. Nevertheless, the material permits us to draw some conclusions concerning the demographic character of this immigration:

1. Though we find occasional entries for Catholics from Syria in the Franciscan registers for the seventeenth century, it is only in the middle of the eighteenth century that a marked increase in the number of Greek Catholic baptisms suggests a substantial influx of Greek Catholics from Syria. The sharp drop in the number of baptisms in the Greek Catholic registers for Cairo between 1780 and 1800 implies that the size of the community was decreasing again.

2. Practically all immigrants seem to have been Greek Catholics. Very rarely do we find a Maronite death, birth, or marriage entered in the Franciscan registers. This impression is confirmed by the only existing demographic description of the Syrians in Damiette, which was prepared in 1808 by the Maronite priest Antun Marun. No registers exist for the Greek Orthodox population during this period. But there is also no other indication that Greek Orthodox immigrants from Syria were present in any notable number.

3. The centers of Syrian immigration during the eighteenth century were Cairo, Damiette and to a very limited degree Rosetta.

4. The large majority of the immigrants came from Aleppo and Damascus. Occasionally we find Sidon, Acre or Jaffa indicated as place of origin. But most often these were already transit stations for a migration that originated from the great cities of the Syrian interior.

Perhaps the most important observation is that the Syrian Christian immigration to Egypt during the eighteenth century was almost exclusively a Greek Catholic affair. In fact, it can only be understood as part of the genesis of the Greek Catholic community in Aleppo and Damascus at the beginning of the 18th century and its consequent migration from there to the coastal towns of the south eastern Mediterranean.

A. THE GENESIS OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC COMMUNITY: ITS EARLY SPREAD

In all the towns along the Mediterranean coast from Alexandria to Beirut we can observe the steep rise of the Greek Catholic community to positions of wealth and political influence during the eighteenth century. The Greek Catholics were Arab-speaking Christians originating from the Syrian trade cities of Damascus and Aleppo. Along the coast they gained control over custom stations, and at times almost

monopolized the administration of various local rulers as scribes, bankers and advisers. They made the maritime trade between Egypt and Syria their exclusive domain. The Greek Catholic success is even more remarkable if we consider the fact that the community began to organize itself only at the beginning of the eighteenth century and was viewed by the Ottoman government as an illegal group for another one hundred years. Often the rise of the Greek Catholic community diminished the position of the Jewish community, which had held similar influential positions in commerce, finance and administration.

Dhimmis had, of course, played an important role throughout Muslim history, although their status within society remained ambivalent. Muslim law had defined the status of the *dhimmi* unequivocally as one inferior to that of Muslims. From building regulations for houses of non-Muslims to their rights in a Muslim court, everything confirmed their inferior status. Yet the theory of Muslim law did not necessarily reflect the realities of Muslim society. The actual role and status of the *dhimmi* in Muslim society was, often in contradiction to the religious law, determined by such aspects as occupation, wealth, and closeness to the source of power, i.e., access to political rulers. The skills of Jews and Christians as physicians and scribes and their wealth as merchants and bankers frequently provided them with access to the powerful and the mighty. Muslim rulers would often prefer *dhimmis* over Muslims as their administrators, bankers, and physicians for the same reasons that they used imported mercenaries in their armies. Without a popular local basis of support, these groups were dependent for their welfare upon the good will of the ruler and were therefore more likely to remain loyal. Needless to say, the very circumstance of their weakness and lack of popular support which recommended the *dhimmis* for employment by the Muslim rulers also made them extremely vulnerable to the whims of the ruler and the changes in his political fortunes. The *dhimmis'* positions as administrators, tax collectors, or court physicians never received institutional sanction, but remained defined by a relation ad hominem. Only the good will and the needs of the individual ruler gave substance to the elevated position of the *dhimmis*.

The same ambivalence in the *dhimmis'* status and role in society can be observed in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. During the first two centuries of Ottoman rule, *dhimmis* were able to obtain key positions in the financial affairs of the government in spite of their legally inferior position. They played decisive roles in trade and as tax farmers of the custom stations. At the same time, they were frequently the major suppliers of loans and cash to the Walis and Pashas and could thereby exert powerful influence upon them.

By 1575 Rauwolff reported, "There is abundance of Jews through all of Turkey in any Trading Town, but chiefly in Aleppo and this Town of Tripoli, where they have built a very large Habitation and a delicate Synagoge. These Jews have the revenues of the Customes of the Grand Signior in their hands..."[4] By 1700 Tripoli

4 Rauwolff, 31.

had a population of about 500 Jews, but also "an abundance of Maronites and Greeks".[5] In the 1720's the customs of Tripoli were still in the hands of Jews.[6]

Around 1600, Teixeira estimated 1,000 Jewish and 1,500 Christian houses for Aleppo, but in contrast to the Christians "many of them (the Jews) are rich, most Merchants, the rest Brokers, and Handycrafts as Goldsmiths, Lapidaries and the like".[7] In the middle of the seventeenth century the chief of customs was a Jew who worked hand in glove with the Wali of Aleppo to extort maximum custom fees from the French.[8] As late as 1753, the longtime resident of Aleppo, A. Russel, asserts that "From the extensive connection of the Jews with the commercial world, their fasts and festivals occasion an almost universal stagnation of trade. They not only prove an impediment to the departure of the great caravans but retard their march when actually on the road; and even the Bashaws, and other Grandees, are sometimes obliged to postpone the dispatch of their affairs, when it interferes with the Jewish holidays."[9]

At the same time, the French consul in Cairo writes, *"Les Fermiers de la douane qui sont deux Juifs pleins d'Esprit et de subtilité sont ses (Ibrahim Kakhya) satellites. Ils ont acquis tant de pouvoir sur luy qu'ils luy font faire le bien et le mal par un simple mot..."*[10]

A similar picture can be drawn for the Armenian community. After the destruction of Julfa by Shah 'Abbas I of Persia in 1604, Armenians were resettled in Isfahan, but many also emigrated to the Ottoman Empire and even went as far as India and Indonesia in the East, and to Venice, Livorno, and Amsterdam in the West. Early in the seventeenth century the Armenian family of Khocha Petik controlled all the silk trade with the English, Dutch, Venetians, and Spanish in Aleppo. Khocha Petik was made customs director of all of Syria.[11]

Trade and management of government revenues seems to have gone hand in hand with wealth and political influence. Though inferior under the religious law, the Jewish and Armenian communities flourished economically and wielded considerable political influence. Especially as tax farmers of custom stations they had ample opportunity to grow wealthy. But it would be erroneous to consider their control over these positions as the primary source of wealth for the Jewish and Armenian *dhimmis*. In order to obtain the tax farming rights to any custom station,

5 Dandini, 24.

6 In 1730 a certain Abraham de Leon, who had been *douanier* of Tripoli for the preceding four years, had to go into hiding at at time of popular unrest and rebellion against the local Pasha (Correspondence Consulaire, Lemaire to Maurepas, October 1730, Tripoli, in Ismail, III, 331).

7 Teixeira, II, 70. He describes the houses and churches of the local Christians as "near one another, small, poor, and of mean structure".

8 Sara, 102.

9 Russell, II, 78.

10 AN B^1, 330, 67.

11 Sanjian, 47.

it was necessary to advance considerable sums to the authorities; in other words, only the rich could hope to become richer.

The original wealth of the Armenians and Jews was accumulated in the international trade passing through the Ottoman Empire. The two minorities had, since the Ottoman conquest of Syria, established their role in commerce through the help of so-called ethnic trading networks. At a time when international trade was not regulated and secured with the help of international banking systems, insurance companies, etc., the risks of such trade could be reduced to a reasonable level only on the basis of personal trust. The most reliable relations of this sort were family relations. Almost equally reliable, but providing a much wider base for the development of trade, were the relations of an ethnic and/or religious group which was spread as a minority over a variety of lands, cities, and societies. A common cultural or religious background, shared values, and a feeling of loyalty to the group made commercial relationships between members of the same minority especially trustworthy. The reverse aspect of this trust was, of course, the severe pressure that any minority in a given place could exert on its individual members to honor their business commitments, lest the business reputation of the whole local community should suffer. Group loyalty and group pressure made ethnic trading networks extremely reliable, even when they stretched over great geographic distances. Jews and Armenians were uniquely equipped to build up such ethnic trading networks. Both minorities possessed a strong group loyalty. Recent migration had brought the Jews from Spain to Europe and to every major city in the Ottoman Empire. Armenians, coming from the East, had penetrated the Ottoman Empire and reached the European commercial centers. Close coherence of the group and, at the same time, wide geographic distribution of its members ensured the success of the Jewish and Armenian merchants.

In contrast to these communities, the Copts in Egypt and the various native Christian communities in Syria were geographically very confined. Consequently, they did not participate in the international trade and could never amass the capital needed to acquire tax farming rights over the customs stations. Therefore, the local *dhimmis* remained less wealthy and less politically influential, though they were much more numerous than the Armenians or Jews.

This situation changed for the first time in eighteenth-century Syria when a group of native Arab Christians established a new community and began to strive for positions of wealth and influence similar to that of the Jewish and Armenian *dhimmis*. In order to understand the reasons for the rise of the Greek Catholic community and the concomitant decline of the Jewish community, it will be necessary to discuss first some of the major political and economic changes that took place in Syria and Egypt during this period.

The first change concerns the power relations between the Ottoman government and the provinces, between the center and the periphery. The Ottoman conquests of the Arab provinces had brought Syria and Egypt under the direct political control of Istanbul. The central government established its military and administrative

domination over the provinces and ensured the annual flow of revenues to the capital. This is not the place to discuss the reasons for and origins of the decay of the central power in the Ottoman Empire. It is sufficient to observe that the heavy military defeats in Europe at the beginning of the eighteenth century highlighted the internal weakness of the Empire. The hold of the center over the periphery loosened, with growing provincial autonomy as the result.

In Egypt, Ibrahim Kakhya had reduced the Ottoman Pasha to insignificance by mid-century. His successor 'Ali Bey al-Kabir challenged the Ottoman government in military action, and even tried to assert his independence formally. At the same time, Zahir al-'Umar developed in Acre local autonomy into almost complete independence from the Ottoman Empire. More problematic is the rule of the 'Azm family in Damascus between 1725 and 1758. The 'Azm family never challenged the Ottoman government openly and never even built up an independent military force. Yet the sheer fact that as a family they were able to occupy the governorship of Damascus for long stretches of time and that of neighboring Sidon, Tripoli, and Aleppo over certain periods, raises the question whether the 'Azms were not able to enhance their local autonomy at the cost of a weakened Ottoman central government. Shamir has argued the latter view, claiming that the 'Azms were one of the first governors of local origin and that their rule over longer periods in Damascus (Isma'il al-'Azm 1725–1730, As'ad al-'Azm 1743–1757) and their placing relatives as governors of Sidon (1728–1730), Tripoli (1728–1730), and Aleppo (1755–1757) indeed show a local dynasty benefiting from weakness of the central government.[12] This argument has been further buttressed by Rafeq who depicts the 'Azms as a local notable family of rural background and compares their length of tenure as governors with the brevity of tenure of governors in the preceding century.[13]

Recently Barbir has made the case for a different interpretation. He sees the changing patterns in the tenure of governorship as part of an overall attempt by a by no means declining central government. Briefly, he argues that since the end of the seventeenth century the Ottoman government deliberately restructured the governorship of Damascus by relieving the governor of his duty to send troops to the Balkan front and by entrusting him as *amir al-hajj* with the safe performance of the annual pilgrimage from Damascus to Mecca.[14] This task the 'Azms fulfilled successfully for many years. For the Ottomans it was part of their justification for power to enable the Muslim believer to perform the pilgrimage in safety. But the 'Azms had as local rulers also a very strong interest in the pilgrimage since the economic prosperity of Damascus depended on the trade with the Hejaz. Much of Barbir's argument seems to depend on the "deliberate" character of these Ottoman policies. But whether the Ottomans pursued these policies deliberately or made a virtue of necessity, the end result of their restructuring the tasks of the governor-

12 Shamir, 1–5.
13 Rafeq, 89, 90.
14 Barbir, 33–56.

ship was still one of greater decentralization. The local governor was made more responsible for local affairs, for which task he also was permitted to make greater use of local revenues. Barbir also goes into great detail to prove that the 'Azm family was not of local origin.[15] But whether they were or not somewhat misses, I believe, the point. Important is that their contemporaries perceived them as people of local origin and found it important enough to point out.[16] Barbir admits the unusual length of the 'Azm family's tenure without finding a convincing argument that it did not reflect a weakness in the central government. In fact, Barbir admits the strength of the 'Azms when he says "The 'Azms were the logical instrument to continue the Ottoman reorganization of the province of Damascus that began in the late seventeenth century. That they tended to serve themselves more than the state was partly the reason for the failure of the Ottoman policy by the mid-eighteenth century."[17] Was it not rather the already existing weakness of the central government which permitted the 'Azms to "serve themselves"? Barbir also ignores the profound economic shifts which occur during this period in Syria and which we shall discuss later on in the context of tendencies toward local autonomy.

I would argue that the 'Azms' length of tenure, their "dynastic" patterns of holding governorships in Syria, and their preoccupation with the pilgrimage as a means of ensuring economic prosperity in Damascus all point to a very strong inclination of the 'Azms toward local autonomy, even though they never rebelled openly against the Ottoman authorities. I shall furthermore argue that the rule of the 'Azms was not the only sign of such tendencies toward local autonomy in Damascus but that the formation of the Greek Catholic community itself constituted a challenge to a weakened central government.

The second major development in the area that concerns us here is of an economic nature. Recently, attempts have been made to connect the European economic penetration of the area with the disruption of traditional patterns. These interpretive efforts have concentrated on eighteenth-century Egypt, arguing basically that increased trade with Europe during this period led to new modes of production, to social change, and to new intellectual expression. The main proponent of this thesis, Gran, believes he detects by 1760 an "enlarged French involvement",[18] a "sustained revival of the middle classes in Egypt" and a "transformation of production" from which capitalism developed.[19] This he believes was accompanied by and resulted in a cultural trend of intensified literary output and "the rise in critical consciousness in scholarship".[20] I shall not deal here with the rather doubtful con-

15 Barbir, 57–61.
16 Buraik, 35–36.
17 Barbir, 63–64.
18 Gran, 8.
19 Gran, 11.
20 Gran, 58.

nection Gran makes between economic and cultural revival,[21] but concentrate on the question of the assumed enlarged French involvement in Egypt. The "gross statistics" of Masson, as Gran calls the only statistics he refers to, show indeed, on first sight, an increase in the volume of trade with France.

Table 1: Average annual exports from Egypt to Marseille[22]

1715–1730	2.05 million livres
1749–1755	2.50 million livres
1764–1769	2.70 million livres
1769–1774	3.56 million livres
1768–1787	2.73 million livres
1786–1789	2.84 million livres

The peak occurs precisely in the years of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir's rule and is probably easier to explain as proof of his ability to guarantee the safety of international trade than as an indication of deliberate economic expansion by the French. But the situation is more complex than this. Masson also informs us[23] that at the end of the seventeenth century the average annual exports to France were worth three million livres. Are we to assume an economic and cultural revival for this period too? Or does this not mean that France barely regained in the 1770's the volume of trade it had already 70 years earlier? In fact, if we add the factor of French inflation during the century we can see that since 1730 French imports from Egypt declined or, at best, stagnated. If an average price index of 100 is assumed for the period 1726 to 1741, the index had risen to 148 during the period 1771–1789 and to 165 during the last four years of this period.[24] In other words, French annual imports from Egypt between 1769 and 1774 were in 1730 livres worth only 2.4 million livres and in the period between 1786 and 1789 only 1.7 million livres. Even at the peak, during the early 1770's real increases lay merely 20 % over those of 1715–1730 and still considerably below those at the end of the seventeenth century. There hardly can be any talk of an "enlarged French involvement" in Egypt.

European economic penetration did have a profound effect on society in the Middle East and contributed greatly to the departure from traditional patterns and the development of new social, economic and intellectual formations. But I think we are more justified in looking to Syria if we want to observe the earliest effects of this impact. During the eighteenth century the economy, political structure, and demographic patterns of Syria experienced profound transformations. International economic developments as well as the above-mentioned internal political changes in the Ottoman Empire determined these transformations.

21 For a discussion of this issue see G. Baer's review of Gran's book in JESHO, XXV (1982), 217.

22 Masson, *XVIIIe*, 510, 522.

23 Masson, *XVIIe*, 407.

24 Soboul, 53.

Since the end of the fifteenth century a revival of trade and a renewal of the economy had begun in Syria. Aleppo became the most important emporium for merchandise from Central Asia, Iran, the Persian Gulf and South Asia. Merchants from France, England, Venice, and Holland settled in Aleppo and the city soon became the third largest in the Ottoman Empire. During the seventeenth century the English were the most important traders in Aleppo, exchanging mainly their wool cloths for silk. Silk, one of the major items of trade in Aleppo, was imported from Persia.

Damascus gained its commercial importance because it was the starting point for the annual pilgrim caravan to Mecca. On the way back, merchandise from South Arabia, East Africa, and India could be imported. Probably because of its specifically religious character, Europeans and minorities played an insignificant role in this trade.

This economic structure of Syria in which transit trade via Damascus and Aleppo, Alexandretta and Anatolia was the dominant feature changed profoundly during the eighteenth century. The silk trade with Aleppo lost its importance for England, not because England's demand for silk dropped, but because more convenient supply sources had been developed.[25] Simultaneously, Aleppo lost its main supplier of silk with the disintegration of Safavid Iran.

During the same period we can observe a revival of French trade in the Levant. Originally this was the result of Colbert's reorganization of the Chamber of Commerce in Marseille, but soon the rapidly increasing French demand for silk and cotton became the determining factor. By the middle of the eighteenth century the French had replaced the British as the most important European commercial power in Aleppo. Earlier and more important, however, was the development of French trade relations with the Syrian coastal cities from Jaffa to Tripoli. In the hinterlands of these port cities the cultivation of silk and cotton increased steadily. The crops could be sold to the French in the coastal towns without making the detour over Aleppo. The economic center of gravity moved slowly from the Syrian inland to the coastal lands of southwest Syria. International trade lost some of its importance and local cultivation of cash crops became a significant economic factor.

Table 2: Principal items of export from southwest Syria annually to Marseille, in livres[26]

	1700–1702	1750–1754	1786–1789
cotton thread	745.000	1.305.000	421.000
cotton, raw	95.000	1.134.000	69.000
silk	437.000	1.012.000	578.000
textiles	–	40.000	73.000
gall	33.000	43.000	47.000
alizari	–	–	93.000
total	1.446.000	3.705.000	1.399.000

25 For the development of English trade see Davis.

26 Statistics taken from Paris, 415.

The dramatic increase of exports from southwestern Syria in the mid-eighteenth century is clearly visible in the statistics. Especially noticeable is the increase in the export of raw materials. Export of silk more than doubled; that of cotton thread almost doubled; and raw cotton exports increased by a factor of 12. Even if we take inflation of the livre into account we are left with an economic linkage with Europe of such size that we may justifiably expect some economic, social and possibly cultural dislocations in the local society. But whether permanent changes can be expected is doubtful in view of the rapid decline of exports toward the end of the century.

In contrast, the economic situation inland stagnated and at least since the middle of the eighteenth century we can observe the decay of trade in Aleppo and, for somewhat different reasons, in Damascus.

D'Arvieux[27], consul in Aleppo, estimates in 1680 French imports from Aleppo at less than 1 million livres annually, while English exports to Aleppo were 6 million livres worth of merchandise. This paid for their silk imports; i.e. the English trade volume totaled about 12 million livres. If French and Dutch trade is added we arrive at a total trade volume of perhaps 15 million livres. In 1785, French trade reached its peak with almost 8 million livres. At that time it constituted about four fifths of the total European trade volume.

Table 3: French annual imports from Aleppo

	million livres		million livres
1671–1675	0.98	1736–1740	1.66
1686–1700	0.74	1750–1754	2.08
1711–1715	0.92	1765–1769	2.58
1717–1721	1.18	1773–1777	2.29
1724–1728	1.58	1785–1789	3.52

It should be noticed that the sudden increase after 1785 is directly related to the destruction of the coastal trade in southwest Syria at the same time. If we add that inflation of the livre between 1740 and 1785 led to price increases between 25 and 100% (silk 60%, cotton 250%)[28], the actual volume of merchandise increased much less. At 1740 prices the 1785 total volume of merchandise would have been actually 5.5 million livres (imports and exports). This represents a clear decrease of total trading activities during the eighteenth century in Aleppo compared to 1680.

Two conditions had to be fulfilled to guarantee the successful trade of Damascus. First, the passage of the pilgrimage to Mecca had to be secure. With the growing might of the Wahhabi movement in the second half of the eighteenth century, this was decreasingly the case. Second, the Pasha of Damascus had to be securely enough established in his position to be able to leave Damascus annually for some

27 Quoted in Masson, *XXVIIIe*, 374.

28 Paris, 583. Statistics in Table 3 taken from *ibid.*, 415.

four months, and he had to be wealthy enough to finance sufficient troops to cover the Pilgrim caravan. After the death of As'ad Pasha, this was rarely the case.[29]

During the eighteenth century we can also observe migratory movements which reflect shifts in the economy. Maronite peasants from North Lebanon migrated southwards, established new settlements, and expanded silk cultivation.[30] A much smaller migration occurred from Cyprus and the Aegean to the same area of southwest Syria. It consisted mainly of Greeks who were, however, soon Arabized, with many becoming Greek Catholics in the process.[31] Finally, from the inland cities of Damascus and Aleppo thousands of people – mainly Christians – moved to the coastal towns and their surroundings, lured by trade and other economic opportunities. The third phenomenon, the migration of Arab Christians from the inland cities to the coastal lands, is closely related to the genesis and development of the Greek Catholic community. The schism between the Greek Catholic and the Greek Orthodox in Aleppo and Damascus in the early eighteenth century was not just the creation of yet another religious minority, but signified the formation of a new Arabic-speaking middle class which provided the link between the primary producer – Syria – and the world economy.

The usual explanation for the emergence of the Greek Catholic community as an entity separate from the Greek Orthodox argues along the following lines: Under the umbrella of the expanding economic and political position of France, the Roman Catholic Church sent missionaries to convert people in the Levant. Catholic missionary activities and expanding French trade were both expressions of the growing power of Europe vis-a-vis the Ottoman Empire. Local Christians were hired by French merchants as agents, and becoming Catholic cemented this relationship. It is further argued that upon becoming Catholic and formal protégés of the French, such Christians gained certain tax and customs advantages and their capital and merchandise could be protected from the capricious demands of the Ottoman authorities. Thus favored, indigenous Christians who had converted to Catholicism rose in trade and began to constitute a new commercial bourgeoisie, working for French interests in the Levant.

This explanation has a certain validity insofar as it assumes a relationship between the buildup of French trade in Syria and Catholic missionary activities on the one hand and the development of the Greek Catholic community on the other. But the assumed causality of this relationship is too simplistic because it disregards completely the internal factors that led to the genesis of the Greek Catholic community. Even a cursory glance at the events shows that (a) the open breach with the Orthodox Church began where French trade and diplomatic protection were minor

29 Rafeq, 314–317; see also Dimashqi.

30 For an informative case study of Maronite expansion toward south see Rufa'il's history of Dlebta, where most families settled during the late 17th and the 18th century after having migrated from the north.

31 The Mishaqa, Turk, Bustrus families for instance.

– in Damascus; (b) families like the Mishaqa, Fir'aun, as-Sabbagh, or Tarrazi were probably engaged in trade before they became Catholic, and certainly long before they enjoyed any kind of French protection; (c) the French conducted intensive trade elsewhere, as, for instance, in Egypt, without causing a Uniate movement to develop among the local Christians.

There is no doubt that, since the end of the sixteenth century, Catholics missionaries had already been actively trying to bring various Christian communities into the fold of the Roman Catholic Church. Their first objective had been the Maronite community, which as a whole accepted the authority of the Pope. But there were not many Maronites to be found outside Mt. Lebanon in cities like Tripoli, Damascus, Aleppo, or even Sidon. Here the main missionary effort was directed toward the Greek Orthodox, Jacobite and, to a lesser degree, Armenian communities. The missionary tactic was usually to attempt to convert the local clergy since "the people were uneducated and completely ignorant of their religion anyway".[32] In Aleppo one of the first groups to be subjected to the missionary zeal were the Jacobites *"comme étant la plus faible (communauté)"*.[33]

Occasionally missionaries could rely on French diplomatic support. The French consuls in Syria would defend the missionaries against local Pashas and governors, whose support the non-Catholic clergy actively sought in their fight against Catholic subversion of their communities. In one instance, in the struggle for the appointment of a certain André, a confessed Catholic, to the position of Jacobite Patriarch in 1666, even the French ambassador at the Sublime Porte intervened.[34] A subsequent Patriarch, Pierre (1688–1702), received an annual subsidy from the French king. This, however, did not prevent the Ottoman authorities from throwing him into prison, where he died.[35] French diplomatic support for the missionaries remained sporadic and was often ineffective.

Before 1724 conversion seems to have been limited to a few and often done in secret.[36] Fear of persecution was strong and justified. In a state where religious affiliation was one of the main organizational principles of society, it bordered on high treason or open rebellion against the state to withdraw from any one of the officially recognized religious communities and to identify with a denomination represented only by foreigners. Until the nineteenth century, the Orthodox clergy would accuse Christian Ottoman subjects who had converted to the religion of the "Franks" –, i.e., to the Catholicism of the Europeans –, of having become "Franks"

32 Rabbath I, 452; II, 78–79.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.* I, 456, 466.

35 *Ibid.* I, 108, 119.

36 It is practically impossible to get any precise numerical impression. The Carmelites converted, according to their own claims, between 1669 and 1681 in Aleppo 38 persons, or annually about 3–4 persons (Rabbath, II, 86–87). A certain Père Anselme reports the conversion of 25 women and 12 men which he performed in Aleppo in 1657–1658 (*ibid.*, 78–78).

themselves, collaborating with the Europeans, spying for them and considering the Ottoman state their enemy. Such serious accusations were only – though not always – mitigated by the Ottoman view that in the end all Christians were the same and that dogmatic niceties were of no concern to the authorities as long as all Christians paid their taxes and obeyed the law. The legal position of the Catholic subjects, however, remained vulnerable until the 1830's when they were fully recognized by the Ottoman Sultan as independent communities (Armenian Catholic, Greek Catholic, Syrian Catholic, and Chaldean) with a legal status equal to that of the Orthodox communities.

One other aspect of Catholic missionary activities in the seventeenth century probably had a more long-lasting impact upon the local Arab Christians. Realizing the poor results of direct attempts at conversion, the missionaries reasoned that education of the young might provide them with a more receptive audience for the Catholic message. It is difficult to obtain a precise numerical impression of these attempts in education. Reports speak of 30 students annually in Aleppo around 1640 and of 50–70 students in Damascus around 1650. Schools were also opened, at least on a temporary basis, in Tripoli and Sidon.[37] This would mean that at the beginning of the eighteenth century a considerable number of local Christians had received some kind of formal education –; an education, moreover, which was not under the control of their own clergy.

In 1724 the schism between the Greek Orthodox Church and those of its members who were willing to follow Catholicism and papal authority came into the open. After the death of Athanasius III, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, the community in Damascus acted quickly to elect and install an avowed Catholic, Cyrillus VI, as Patriarch. At the same time, and apparently at the request of the community in Aleppo, Sylvester, the nominee of the late Athanasius, was appointed Patriarch of Antioch by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Instanbul, head of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire.

Cyrillus VI was the nephew of Euthimius (d. 1723), the longtime Bishop of Sidon and Tyre. The latter had been a very active Catholic. His business interests as well as those of many other members of his community had led to close relations with the French and the Catholic Church. These relations could provide considerable protection from Maltese pirates for the coastal shipping of these Christians.[38] Clearly, Catholicism had spread widely within the Greek Orthodox community of Sidon before 1724. Euthimius had also been active beyond the limits of his bishopric. With the support of 'Uthman Pasha, the governor of Sidon, he had attempted to incorporate Acre into his bishopric. Probably 'Uthman had hoped in this fashion to extend at least his commercial control via Catholic merchants further south along the coast.[39]

37 Rabbath, II, 239; Hajjar, 220–222.
38 Haddad, 40–45.
39 Rabbath, I, 591.

'Uthman had become Pasha of Damascus in 1720 and it was he who confirmed the election of the nephew of his protégé as Patriarch. The missionaries had been actively promoting Cyrillus as patriarchal candidate and a French merchant from Sidon lent more than 20 purses to Cyrillus in order to obtain an official confirmation of his election from 'Uthman Pasha.[40] Soon thereafter 'Uthman was recalled from his position as Pasha of Damascus. Cyrillus VI, bereft of protection by the local government, could not withstand the authority of Sylvester, whose appointment had been authorized by the Ottoman government in Istanbul. Cyrillus VI had to flee to Mt. Lebanon, where he was eventually confirmed by Rome as the Patriarch of all Greek Catholics.

But it would be misleading to see the election of Cyrillus VI in Damascus as the result of French policies and Catholic missionary activities. The missionaries certainly were pleased with his election and apparently some French merchants expected better commercial access to Damascus upon the establishment of a strong Greek Catholic community. But the French government and its diplomatic corps in the Ottoman Empire were bitterly opposed to this development. The tone of the diplomatic reports of the time is one of accusation against the missionaries, whose unwise zeal had brought about an open conflict which could only harm the indigenous Catholics.[41] The French government, in fact, was unwilling as well as unable to take direct steps to protect the indigenous Catholics, steps that might only disturb the good relations with the Sublime Porte.

As early as 1701 the French government had made its policy clear in a letter to the Maronite Patriarch, promising protection and compensation for damages to the Maronite dragoman of the French vice-consul in Sidon, but *"(Sa Majesté) n'a point estimé à propos de le faire regarder comme Français: parce que ces sortes de privilèges, qui sont contraires au bien de ses sujets, tirent toujours à conséquence. C'est au surplus un zèle un peu outré aux missionaires de se mêler de ces sortes d'évasion, dont le succès est peu utile et qui peuvent, en les exposant à des avanies considérables, faire perdre les fruits de leur travail."*[42] In a letter, May 6, 1725, to the minister Maurepas, the French ambassador in Istanbul, d'Andrezel, accuses the missionaries of a *"zèle outré et peu prudent"* and of *"mouvements indiscrets"* which have only damaged the position of the Catholics. He assures the minister that *"malgré toutes les insinuations des missionaires d'Alep et de Damas, je n'avais fait aucune démarche en faveur du dit Séraphim (i.e., Cyrillus VI)"*.[43] At the same time the French government pointed out to the papal Nuncio that the Capitulations permitted Catholic priests in the Ottoman Empire only to read their mass in their traditional establishments, but not to involve themselves with the local population.[44]

40 Rabbath, I, 571, 593. The merchant was François Perry who was recalled to France for having meddled in the internal affairs of the Greek Orthodox community.

41 Rabbath, I, 550, 573.

42 *Ibid.*, 544.

43 *Ibid.*, 575.

44 Rabbath, II, 374.

Curiously enough, the community in Aleppo, where missionary activities and the French diplomatic and commercial presence had been much stronger, was satisfied with the appointment of Sylvester. In fact, the French ambassador supported the Patriarch Sylvester and insisted that the missionaries should avoid all cause for trouble. During 1724–1725 Sylvester had a free hand to persecute the local Catholics in Aleppo. Only when his anti-Catholic zeal caused him to transgress French diplomatic rights in Aleppo and to have a French church forcefully searched during a service for possible Aleppine Christians participating in Catholic services did the French consul begin to take action against him. He lodged a complaint with the Pasha who proposed to arrest Sylvester. By this time, the latter had alienated the whole Greek Orthodox community in Aleppo. He had extorted considerable sums by arbitrarily accusing many members of the community of being Catholic and confiscating their property.[45] The fact that he had business dealings with the English (he allegedly pawned silver ornaments taken from the church coffers of Damascus worth some 9,000 piasters to an English merchant, Sherman, in Aleppo) certainly also helped to change French attitudes toward him. In August, 1726 Sylvester slipped quietly out of Aleppo to avoid arrest and the wrath of his own community.

The day after he left, a delegation of some 400–500 Aleppine Christians came to the Pasha to testify to Sylvester's malconduct. At the same time, the community sent a delegation to Istanbul demanding the detachment of Aleppo from the Antioch Patriarchate and the appointment of a bishop chosen by the community in Aleppo itself. Their candidate was a certain Maximus, a native of Aleppo; Sylvester had been a Greek from Cyprus.[46] The new bishop was fairly tolerant and let his flock attend the churches of their choice. Only when lack of attendance in his own Orthodox churches threatened to reduce his revenues did he begin to complain. The dignitaries of the community quickly assured him that his income would be guaranteed. The Greek Orthodox community of Aleppo could now be described as having turned completely toward Catholicism.[47]

In the preceding hundred years or so, missionary activities had led to individual conversions and, on occasion, to the placement of Catholics in important clerical positions in the Orthodox communities. But the crisis of 1724 was quite different in character. The appointment of Cyrillus VI was not made, as was the custom, by the Greek Orthodox authorities in Istanbul. Neither was it, as we have seen, the outcome of French diplomatic pressure. It was rather the result of a local "election" since apparently the large majority of the community in Damascus supported him. The letter written by the Damascene Greek Orthodox community to the Ottoman authorities requesting the official confirmation of Cyrillus VI's election as Patriarch is signed by over 330 dignitaries of the community, including twenty-nine priests[48].

45 *Ibid.*, 355–367.
46 Aimé-Martin, I, 386.
47 Buraik, 5–6.
48 *Ibid.*, appendix, 111–121.

What was it, then, that drove the Christian communities of Aleppo and Damascus to take such a drastic step, one which was certain to bring down upon them the wrath of the church authorities in Istanbul and which put their communities beyond the protection of the legal framework of the *millet* system? For an answer, I believe, we have to look at the socioeconomic development of these communities in the century preceding the establishment of the Uniate community, as well as the new economic opportunities the French commercial presence offered at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

At the end of the fifteenth century Aleppo and Damascus experienced an economic revival which was accelerated with the incorporation of the area into the Ottoman Empire. Most likely the native Arab Christians participated in this revival as artisans. The fact that their family names so frequently indicate crafts leads to such a conclusion.[49] They apparently came to dominate some of the more prestigious crafts demanding higher skills. Thus the architects of Sulaiman al'Azm's palace in Damascus were all Christians.[50] Especially if their craft dealt with silk materials, they quickly came into commercial contact with European merchants. In Aleppo, the Tarrazi family (*tarraza*, Arabic "to embroider") already had contacts with Venetian merchants in the seventeenth century because of the European demand for silver and gold embroidery on silk, in which the family specialized.[51] For several generations, the as-Sabbagh family had owned the silk cultivation in Shuwair, and probably also engaged in silk cloth production, when four brothers moved, for trading purposes, from Shuwair to the coastal cities at the end of the seventeenth century.[52] But most trade occurred in cooperation with European traders or on a very restricted local scale. The Fir'aun family, for example, supposedly made its wealth in the grain trade between the Hauran and Damascus.[53] That the Tarrazi family traded between Aleppo and Iran was probably the exception among Arabic-speaking Christians and is most likely explained by the fact that the family had immigrated to Aleppo from Mosul during the sixteenth century and still had family and coreligionist relations at least within 'Iraq.[54]

At the end of the seventeenth century, the Arab-speaking Christians were newcomers to commerce and it seems only logical that they should have concentrated their efforts on materials and products which were also relatively new to the market, i.e., local silk and cotton. It also seems reasonable that, lacking any ethnic trading network in Europe, they would choose as their main trading partners those Euro-

49 E.g., Sakakini, Sabunji, Nahhas, Khayyat, Najjar, etc. Part of the Fir'aun family in Damascus were saddle makers, *surujī* (Basha, *Uwat*, 12). The Sabbagh family, however, claims that their name is a corruption from Yuhanna as-Sabigh, John the Baptist, the saint of the church in Shuwair, the origin of the Sabbagh (Shaikhu, 24–34).

50 al-Budairi, 55.

51 Armalah, 13.

52 Shaikhu, 24–34.

53 Basha, 10.

54 Armala, 11.

peans who, though never completely absent from the commercial scene of the Levant, were only beginning to develop their trade with the region in full force. As noted above, since the end of the seventeenth century the French had begun to look increasingly for supplies of silk and, later, cotton from Syria – the reason for the economic flourishing of southern and western Syria during the eighteenth century.

In a sense, the French and the Arabic-speaking Christian merchants were both disturbing new arrivals on the commercial scene of Syria. The value and volume of their trade was rapidly rising. They used new trade routes as is witnessed by their increasing presence in the coastal towns of southern Syria. Both were keenly aware of their competition with the older, more established commercial powers – English, Dutch, and Italian on the one hand, Jews and Armenians on the other.

The French and Arab Christian merchants also fulfilled complementary functions for each other. The French, because of their cultural and political restrictions, were hardly able to move beyond their bases in the coastal towns and Aleppo. They needed a group of local merchants to supply them with the desired raw materials and products from the hinterland. The Christian Arab merchants – though expanding their local ethnic trading network – completely lacked any such network in Europe. They had to rely on the French merchants to fulfill this function. From this perspective, the conversion of Arab Christian traders to Catholicism can be understood as an attempt to fortify the relation with the French and to create a local ethnic trading network based on Catholicism.

But it should be made clear that entering the world of commerce and accepting the Catholic faith were not coeval processes. The Tarrazis became Catholic only in 1774 after being merchants for at least three or four generations.[55] In the 1750's Jirjis Mishaqa, whose father had already been a trader in the coastal area, converted to Catholicism. Though ostensibly Jirjis Mishaqa's conversion was for strictly private reasons (marriage), it certainly helped business relations to be Catholic in one of the oldest strongholds of Catholicism and French trade, Sidon, where Jirjis had moved in 1752.[56]

Rarely are such precise dates of conversion available. In fact, there often exists a pious attempt to push the date of conversion as far back in family histories as possible. For the famous Fir'aun family in Damascus the chronicler implies that their Catholicism reached back to the fifteenth century.[57] This is not a very likely propo-

55 *Ibid.*

56 He seems to have been fairly unaware of the whole issue and indifferent to the dogmatic subtleties. When his prospective in-laws demanded that he convert to Catholicism, he first asked what Catholics were. He was taken to the San Salvatore monastery to observe the practice of the religion. After a few days he came to the conclusion that the prayers were the same, the liturgical language was Greek and the garb of the monks was similar to that of the Greek Orthodox monks, "The Catholics are Greek Orthodox; why did you change your name when your denomination is the same as mine?" (Mishaqa 1955, 2).

57 Basha, 12–13.

sition. Probably the Fir'auns turned Catholic at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Among the signatures of those supporting Cyrillus VI as Patriarch in 1724 we find the names of two priests from the Fir'aun family. Of the as-Sabbagh family it is claimed that their forefather, Yusuf Mar'i, a very well-to-do landowner in Shuwair, was already a Greek Catholic in 1630. It seems more likely, however, that his grandsons became Catholic when they began to pursue trade in the coastal towns.[58]

In none of the above cases did the people involved enjoy French diplomatic protection either before or after their conversion.[59] The most that can be said is that with the increasing French commercial presence the Arab Christian merchants felt that the promotion of business *"vaut bien une messe"*. But Catholicism was not a condition sine qua non for trade with the French, as is shown by the close collaboration of the French with Jews and Muslims in the commerce of Egypt at the same time. Indeed, in Egypt the French merchants frequently regarded the activities of the Greek Catholic traders with suspicion and open hostility.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century we are looking at an Arab Christian community in Aleppo and Damascus which had gained economic prosperity through high-skill crafts, had obtained a certain educational level and was about to enter seriously the world of commerce.[60] This new, well-to-do, and self-assured urban class also began to demand a greater say in its own communal affairs. The issue of local autonomy came into the open and caused the split between the local communities and church authorities in Istanbul over the question of the appointment of the Patriarch in 1724. A. K. Rafeq misreads the chronicler Buraik when he imputes to him the observation that Cyrillus VI was "the first to be ordained from *aulad al-'Arab* instead of from the Greeks".[61] Buraik, a contemporary of these events and a member of the clergy himself, knew very well that the two immediate and many of the earlier predecessors of Cyrillus VI had been of Arab origin. What was remarkable for him was the fact that, for the first time, the Patriarch was chosen by the local Arab community and not appointed by the Church hierarchy in Istanbul. No fewer than 330 members of the community, among them 29 priests, signed the petition to the Ottoman authorities to confirm their choice of Cyrillus VI.[62] The community in Damascus not only initiated the appointment of the Patriarch on its own, but also felt it needed only to obtain the agreement of the local Ottoman governor and not consent from Istanbul. But it is also remarkable that Cyrillus VI tried to gain recognition as Patriarch from Rome only after he had lost the support of the local authorities in Damascus and had to flee to Mt. Lebanon. He himself did

58 Shaikhu, 29–34.

59 Similar examples could be mentioned such as the Bahri family, the Yaziji family, etc.

60 The Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem stated in 1715 that in Damascus *"se trouve un très grand nombre de Chrétiens et de familles riches"* (Charon, III, 238).

61 Rafeq, 89.

62 Buraik, appendix.

not perceive his election primarily as an acknowledgement of his affiliation with Rome.

Initially, the community of Aleppo accepted the appointment of the Greek candidate, Sylvester, to the Patriarchal See of Antioch. This was probably not a reflection of less desire for local autonomy, but rather of the competition with the Damascene community for control over the Patriarchal See. However, through his extortionary measures, Sylvester soon succeeded in antagonizing the whole community in Aleppo. Their discontent did not lead to a simple demand for replacement of the Patriarch but to a programmatic insistence on separating the bishopric of Aleppo from the Patriarchate of Antioch and appointing a bishop from among the Aleppo community.[63]

The Catholic leanings of Cyrillus VI were not decisive in creating the split with the Greek Orthodox Church. His predecessors had flirted with Catholicism. The fact of his local election was far more important. It demonstrated to the Patriarch in Istanbul that the traditional device of playing different local factions against each other in order to control them all was no longer sufficient. Since 1724, the Patriarch in Istanbul had deemed it necessary to appoint a Greek to the Patriarchal See of Antioch and to progressively hellenize the clergy.[64] From then on, orthodoxy was irrevocably identified with centralist interests, while Catholicism came to symbolize local interests. This split also assumed ethnic coloring in the contrast between a Greek-speaking Orthodox clergy and an Arab-speaking Catholic clergy and community.

It would, of course, be premature to speak here of a nascent Arab nationalism. But certainly we can observe the growing strength of local groups, who, just because secular ideologies such as nationalism were still irrelevant, clothed their challenge to the central authorities in the traditional garb of dogmatic deviation.

Catholicism had been made "available" by the presence of the missionaries, but the establishment of the Greek Catholic community was not the result of missionary success with conversion. The French had neither promised diplomatic protection nor made Catholicism a condition for trade relations. If the Arab Christians in Aleppo and Damascus adopted Catholicism, it was first and foremost a symbolic expression of their demand for local communal autonomy congruent with their recently achieved social and economic status. Local autonomy was the key issue in the genesis of the Greek Catholic community.

The drive toward local autonomy at the time was, as we have seen, not a phenomenon restricted only to the Christians in Syria. Though there seem to have been no direct relation between the two events, it is nevertheless indicative of the mood

63 Aimé-Martin, I, 192–193.

64 Russel, 30, reports that "the Greek Bishop leads a solitary life. Formally recognized and paid for by the community the people do not attend his church but go to the Maronites or attend services at home. The clergy is all Greek-speaking."

of the time that the election of Cyrillus VI and the appointment of the first Arab governor, Isma'il al-'Azm, occurred within a few months of each other.

The economy of Damascus during the first half of the eighteenth century benefited to a degree from the general shift of the economic center of gravity toward the southwest of Syria. But more important, the rule of the 'Azm family, in particular that of Sulaiman al-'Azm, 1734–1738, 1741–1743, and that of As'ad al-'Azm, 1743–1757, gave efficient protection to the annual pilgrimage caravan to Mecca. This resulted in a trade boom in Damascus. The Damascene Christians seem to have participated in the economic flourishing and also enjoyed a new tolerance toward them on the part of local authorities.

1759. At the end of the past year and the beginning of this we begin to mention the oppression which befell the unfortunate Christians there. Oh what a pity for the Christians of Damascus who were like the flowers of April and May (i.e., withering away quickly)! I, the humble author, have read in the histories of Damascus from the time when it surrendered to Islam until now and I have not found one which reported of so much honor, dignity, authority, pride and reputation as they acquired during the past ten years under the rule of As'ad Pasha Ibn al-'Azm. His name was As'ad (the Very Happy) and in his presence was happiness during these past years. We shall mention only a few of the many examples of this. The Damascene Christians – men and women – appeared in whatever clothes they wished and chose, except green ... The means of income, selling, buying, profit making and dealing were not threatened by fear or envy. The Christians appeared in private houses, palaces, and reception halls; something that did not happen to their forefathers and will not again happen to those of following generations.[65]

Damascus, the assembly point for the annual pilgrimage from the Ottoman Empire, was too important for the central government to let its autonomy grow unchecked. Besides, "As'ad Pasha was a typical example of the governor who was interested in the furtherance of his prestige and his fortune within the "Establishment". During his rule in Damascus he did not try to exploit military power to retain his post in defiance of the Sultan's orders."[66] The considerable local authority the al-'Azm governors enjoyed, along with their loyalty to the Sultan, left the Greek Catholics fairly free to run their own affairs unless the protests of the Greek Orthodox clergy reached Istanbul and the central government lent them an ear. In 1745, for instance, the Greek Catholics in Damascus obtained an order from the local authorities to have all Greek Orthodox clergy evicted from the churches and to have the representative of Sylvester, who had been reinstated as Patriarch, arrested. But a month later the Greek Orthodox obtained a government order from Istanbul countering these measures. The Greek Catholics had to withdraw.[67] The position of the Greek Catholics during this period remained precarious in Damascus but still more secure than that of their coreligionists in Aleppo, where the economic

65 Buraik, 62–65. Also Jesuit reports assert that As'ad al-'Azm was favorably disposed toward the Catholics (Aimé-Martin, I, 251).

66 Rafeq, 207.

67 Buraik, 12–13.

decline had already begun and where Ottoman central power – and that meant also Greek Orthodox authority – was felt more directly.

Even at times when the pilgrimage caravans were well protected, the economic position of Damascus remained shaky as long as the provincial government could not establish control over all of southwest Syria with its silk and cotton production and with its coastal towns, the decisive outlets for trade with Europe. The Damascus governors of the al-'Azm family were for short periods able to establish control over Sidon, the port closest to Damascus, by having one of their family appointed governor there.[68]

The Druze in Mt. Lebanon always made the connection with Sidon hazardous, and the Shihabi Amirs gained control over Beirut. Further south Zahir al-'Umar az-Zaidani was able to carve out a territory of his own in spite of the various military actions the al-'Azm governors undertook against him. Zahir's control over the cotton-growing region and the port of Acre barred any attempt of Damascus to expand economic control in this direction.

The coastal lands were the center of the new economic prosperity induced by the demands of the French market for raw materials. It was here and not in Damascus (or Aleppo) that in the second half of the eighteenth century the new tendencies toward local autonomy found their fullest expression – financed largely by the newly obtained economic wealth of the area. Zahir al-'Umar could establish his quasi-independent rule over Acre and the Galilee and, at one point, control the coast from Jaffa to Sidon. In the Mt. Lebanon area, the Shihabi Amirs ruled virtually independent of any Ottoman interference.

The semi-autonomous rulers of these areas could provide the Greek Catholics with effective protection from Ottoman, i.e., Greek Orthodox, harassment. Under these circumstances the Greek Catholics flocked throughout the eighteenth century from the urban centers inland to Mt. Lebanon, the coastal lands and eventually Egypt. In Zahle, the first Greek Catholic church dates from 1740. The originally Druze settlement became an almost exclusively Greek Catholic town.[69] Around 1750, Jirjis Mishaqa built the first Greek Catholic church in Tyre, where the Greek Catholic immigrants soon formed a major part of the population.[70] A similar development can be observed in Acre. Family histories illustrate the same migratory trend. Greek Catholic families rapidly spread along the coast. They soon built up, on a local level, an efficient ethnic trading network, and in each place organized

68 1728–1730, Sulaiman al-'Azm was governor of Sidon while Ibrahim al-'Azm held the governorship of Tripoli and his son controlled Latakiya. At the same time Isma'il al-'Azm ruled as governor of Damascus, 1725–1730. This concentration of power in the hands of the al-'Azm family lasted, however, only until 1730 when they were summarily removed from their positions (Rafeq, 107). As'ad al-'Azm tried as governor of Damascus, 1743–1757, for many years to have his brother, Mustafa, appointed governor of Sidon "to tighten his grip on the Druzes". He obtained this appointment only in 1755 (*ibid.*, 192).

69 Naff, 50–54.

70 Mishaqa 1955, 3–4.

their communities. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, four Sabbagh brothers placed themselves strategically in the towns of Beirut, Sidon, Acre and Damiette.[71] The Fir'auns went from Damascus to Furzul, Zahle, Safed, Nazareth, and later to Egypt, Beirut and even Trieste and Rome, a step which only very few of the Greek Catholics took.[72] A branch of the Zananiri family left the Hauran in 1699 and settled in Damascus and Egypt as well as Palestine and other places in Syria.[73] The Kahils came from Damascus via Acre to Damiette and Cairo. The Bahri family, coming from Homs in the second half of the eighteenth century, spread from Damascus to Acre and Cairo.[74] The net of family relations in Syria and Egypt became even more elaborate through intermarriage among some of the big families. The Greek Catholics also developed an intense loyalty toward their own religious community. Following the *"Seilschaft"* principle of mountain climbers, any Greek Catholic who had established a base for himself in a new place would invariably draw other Greek Catholics after him and help to set them up. Jirjis Mishaqa was the first Greek Catholic to settle in Tyre; soon others followed him and he financed a church for the new community.[75] Ibrahim as-Sabbagh's powerful position in Acre – he was the confidential adviser to Zahir al-'Umar and holder of a monopolist control over most of the trade of Acre – attracted many Greek Catholics. In fact, Acre served as a regular clearing station for Greek Catholics fleeing from repression inland or simply searching for new fortunes. They often moved on from there to Egypt.

Our information on the early immigration of the Greek Catholics to Egypt is very scant. The rather sketchy registers of the Franciscans in Cairo show the first entry of *"Greci Aleppini ma Catholici"* in 1698.[76] The French consular reports from Cairo mention *"chrétiens d'Alep et de Damas"* for the first time in 1730. The report indicates that they were wealthy and Catholic.[77] A marked increase in the number of Greek Catholic baptisms since mid-century would suggest an influx of Greek Catholics. But these registers presumably deal only with people in Cairo and leave us completely in the dark with regard to the situation in Damiette, the earliest base of the immigrants in Egypt.

In general, it may be said that from the beginning Egypt was an attractive haven for the Greek Catholics. In Egypt Greek Catholics did not suffer from the severe persecution which they had experienced in Syria at the hands of the Greek Orthodox. Here the Greek Orthodox community was small and disorganized and the

71 see Shaikhu.

72 Basha 1933, 62.

73 Zananiri, 2.

74 *al-Mashriq*, III (1900), 22; Bahri, 13.

75 Tyre apparently did not even have a mosque at that time. To avoid embarrassment by building a church in a Muslim town which did not have a mosque, he also donated money for the construction of a mosque giving, however, credit for its construction to the governor of Sidon, thereby ingratiating himself with the authorities (Mishaqa 1955, 18).

76 Cairi Veteris Lib. I Mort. et Bapt. 1697-1800, Franciscan Archives, Cairo.

77 AN B^1 320; 331.

power of the central government was withering away. Nevertheless, the Greek Catholics and all other Uniate communities remained "illegal," i.e., unrecognized by the Ottoman government as independent *millets* until the 1830's. Until then, for instance, the Greek Catholics paid annual tributes to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria. By recognizing his authority at least formally and financially, they could usually avoid his open hostility.[78]

Different explanations of the economic factors which brought the Greek Catholics to Egypt have been given. It has been argued[79] that they could obtain documents from the French consuls certifying their Catholicism and by virtue of such documents they, their ships, and their merchandise were protected from assaults by the corsairs. This supposedly gave them a privileged position in the existing trade between Syria and Egypt and gradually eliminated Muslim and Greek Orthodox traders. But it was not only the local Syrian traders who were hurt by this arrangement, as the following consular report from Cairo, dated January 26, 1731, shows:

> Il arrive souvent à Damiette et à Rossete des Saiques de Sirie commandées par des Chrétiens du pays et chargées pour compte des Turcs et des Juifs à qui des marchands français prêtent le nom. Le Consul certifie que le chargement et le fond en argent appartiennent a ces dites et cela pour éviter qu'ils tombent au pouvoir des corsairs Maltais. Le produit de ces chargement est employé en ris et autres denrées de ce pays ce qui expose la nation établie à Rossete aux insultes de la populace. La navigation des Saiques diminue considérablement le profit que faisont autre fois les bâtiments français dans la caravanne. Ces deux motifs sont suffisants pour empêcher les consuls, de donner leurs certificates.[80]

Furthermore the corsairs, hard-pressed to find ships they were permitted to attack, began to raid the river openings of the Nile delta. This created severe difficulties for the French established in Egypt, who were vaguely held responsible for such raids by the local population. By distributing protective certificates to local Christian shippers, the French consuls in Syria had unwittingly created a serious competition for French coastal shipping and endangered the business of French merchants in Egypt. Apparently the issuing of protective certificates was quickly stopped. The consular reports never again mention the issue. The Capitulation Treaty signed in 1741 between France and the Ottoman Empire gave free access to all Ottoman ports to the French merchants. This strengthened the coastal shipping business of the French, and all evidence suggests that the French tramps once again controlled the waters between Syria and Egypt. We also never hear of Greek Catholic merchants actually owning ships. In the only case which came to our attention, the owner *sold* his ship in 1752 in order to invest the capital in local trading opera-

78 Clot, II, 144–145; Khuri, 86.
79 Haddad, R., 40–42.
80 AN B^1 321, 25.

tions.[81] Thus, whatever advantage Greek Catholics enjoyed over local traders in Syria was limited to the 1730's.

Another reason given for the Greek Catholics' migration to Egypt, and their resultant prosperity, is their assumed close cooperation with the French merchants.[82] Though such links existed in Syria, this was definitely not the case in Egypt.

Asserting their commercial power in the Syrian ports and having perhaps benefited for a short while from French consular protection in the coastal shipping business, the Greek Catholics had settled in Damiette. This was the one Egyptian port where the French consuls and the Chamber of commerce of Marseille could not exert their control. It was here that the Greek Catholics achieved their first important entry into the trade with Europe – much to the chagrin of French merchants in Alexandria, Rosetta and Cairo.

At least since the early 1730's French ships visited Damiette regularly to pick up cargoes of rice for France or the Syrian coast. Though the rice was usually paid for in cash, French captains often brought rolls of French cloth with them to sell for their own accounts. As Damiette had no official French representation, the captains could easily bypass the high-priced monopoly of French textile imports, which the French merchants tried to maintain in a stagnating market. The captains sold below the official price to the Syrians who therefore could offer French cloth in the markets of Cairo for less than French merchants. The first complaints about such dealings in Damiette appear in the consular reports of 1737 and are repeated in the following years with great regularity.[83]

In 1749 some 12 percent of all French textile imports entered Egypt via Damiette through the hands of Greek Catholic merchants who avoided the usual custom fees and could – with the help of French captains – sell the textiles at cut rates.[84] In summary, the Syrian traders made their first fortunes in Egypt with smuggled merchandise from France underselling the accredited French merchants.

One European travel account of the time claimed that the Syrian Christains in Damiette deliberately spread rumors about the hostility of the local population against Europeans in order to prevent the latter from settling there and to maintain their own monopoly over the trade in the city.[85]

81 The only evidence for ships owned by any of the better known merchant families is the case of the Mishaqa family. Jirjis Mishaqa *sold* in 1752 the ship his father, Yusuf Patrarki, had brought with him from the Greek Islands (Mishaqa 1955, 2). When Mikha'il al-Jamal was sent back from Acre with presents and messages for 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, he traveled on a French ship (as-Sabbagh, 96).

82 Livingston 1971, 222, implies that the Jews were the collaborators of the Venetians, while the Greek Catholics collaborated with the French (Gran, 8–9). He further believes that the presence of the Greek Catholics in Damiette helped the French there. In fact, the Greek Catholics made every effort to keep the French out and maintain Damiette as their private domain.

83 AN B^1 324; 52. B^1 325; 35. B^1 329; 149.

84 AN B^1 329; 5.

85 Egmont, II, 53–54.

B. THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE GREEK CATHOLICS AND THE JEWS: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Equipped with capital, commercial expertise, and education, the Greek Catholics rose to administrative power in the second half of the eighteenth century. Ibrahim as-Sabbagh's role as chief administrator, manager of all export trade, and personal adviser to Zahir al-'Umar is too well known to need repetition here. His sons and relations, too, held important positions in Acre or other towns of Zahir al-'Umar's realm. Other Greek Catholics, such as Mikhail al-Bahri,[86] were also employed by him. Jirjis Mishaqa managed the trade for the Mutawali Shaikhs in Tyre and the region of Bishara.[87] He later became head of finances for Amir Bashir II,[88] whose closest adviser was a Greek Catholic from Homs, Butrus Karama, a friend and relative of Mikha'il al-Bahri.[89] The Bahri family succeeded for a while in rising in the administration of Damascus under 'Abdallah Pasha al-'Azm and Yusuf al-Kinj. During the rule of Sulaiman Pasha in Sidon, Hanna al-'Aura was the head of the Arab scribes. In Egypt, Mikha'il al-Jamal became *ra 'is ad-dawawin* and *douanier* for 'Ali Bey al-Kabir. Later, the Fir'aun family acquired control over all customs stations in Egypt. Though individual tax farmers were repeatedly dismissed, Egyptian customs stayed in the hands of the Greek Catholics until the arrival of the French. Under Muhammad 'Ali, 'Abbud al-Bahri became a high-ranking official for financial matters.[90] His brother, Hanna al-Bahri, was put in charge of the administration of Syria and the logistic needs of the Egyptian occupation army there.[91]

The list of Greek Catholic administrators and officials is long, but the examples just listed show that by the second half of the eighteenth century the Greek Catholics had acquired a predominant position in Egypt and the Syrian coastland. The search for security and the attraction of economic opportunities had brought great numbers of Greek Catholics to these areas during the eighteenth century. A look at the distribution of minorities at the beginning of the next century confirms this demographic development. In Damiette and Jaffa there were at that time (1815) no Jews, while several hundred Greek Catholics lived there as well as in Alexandria, where the Jewish community had dwindled to 200 people. In Cairo there were

86 Bahri, 14.

87 Mishaqa 1955, 2–4.

88 *Ibid.*, 30, in 1799.

89 Bahri, 14. *"Die schoensten Haeuser in Deirelkamar waren die der griechischen Katholiken. Waehrend die Drusen verarmten und verbannt worden waren, hatten sich diese Leute kleine Vermoegen erworben ... was ihnen sowohl durch ihre Ausdauer, Sparsamkeit und Fleiss, als auch durch den Sonnenschein der Gunst des alten Emir Beshir moeglich wurde"* (Wiedemann, 50).

90 For the description of 'Abbud al-Bahri's sumptuous house in Darb al-Junaina see Jabarti, IV, 303.

91 Bahri, 32–38.

roughly 3,000 Greek Catholics and an equal number of Jews, though the latter seem to have been reduced to destitution.[92] In Aleppo the total Christian population had dwindled from about 50,000 by 1720 to 26,000 by 1791, while the Jewish population seems to have remained fairly stable at 3500–4500.[93] In Damascus, the Christian population dropped from 25,000 in 1730 to about 15,000 in 1790 and to 10,000 by 1845.[94]

Table 4. Minority population 1815

	total population	Greek Catholics	Jews
Sidon	15,000	4,500	500
Acre	7,500	2,000	appr. 200
Jerusalem	26,000	3,500	4–5,000
	total number of houses	**Greek Catholics**	**Jews**
Beirut	780	100	50
Haifa	1,000	500	none
Tyre	200	70	none
Tiberias	550	appr. 20	100
Safed	1,250	none	325
Jaffa	1,200	appr. 100	none

The accuracy of these data is, of course, debatable, as they were not the result of a census but were estimates by more or less well-informed travelers. Nevertheless, the data provide proof of the migration of Arab Christians during the eighteenth century from the Syrian inland cities to the coastal area and the establishment of Greek Catholic communities in all the coastal towns.

A different conclusion can be drawn from these data with regard to the Jewish population. They were numerous in towns like Tiberias, Safed, and Jerusalem, where for historical reasons the Jewish community had been strong. They lived also in the traditional trading centers of Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo. Unlike the Arab Christians, they would not have gained new commercial opportunities by moving to the coast and would certainly have lost their position in the traditional commercial links which, though declining, remained in their hands. As late as 1862 it could be stated that *"les Juifs sont presque exclusivement dans les villes de l'intérieur telles qu'Alep, Damas, Jerusalem ou ils tendent à avoir le monopole de la banque et du commerce."*[95]

92 All the above data and those of Table 4 are taken from Turner, II, passim. Browne speaks of a "few Jews" in Alexandria (p. 8); and with regard to Cairo, he comments, "Jews were once numerous, but are now on the decrease" (p. 76).

93 Aimé-Martin, I, 217; Qar'ali, 63.

94 Rabbath, II, 396; Volney, II, 60; Wiedemann, 232.

95 Edwards, 14. Napier, I, 140–141, never once mentions Jews when discussing the various religious communities living on the Syrian coast land.

Part of the reason for the decline of the Jewish community and the rise of the Greek Catholic was the latters's search for political security and its willingness to follow the changing patterns of trade and economy in Syria during the eighteenth century, which caused the move to the coast. In contrast to the Jews, Greek Catholics had nothing to lose and everything to gain from such a move. The local rulers in these areas needed precisely the skills, capital, and commercial expertise the Greek Catholics were able to offer, and thus their rise as administrators and government officials was a swift one. But their rise was not simply determined by the absence of Jews in those areas where new economic opportunities offered themselves. After all, the Jews constituted a powerful community in Egypt long before the first Greek Catholic set foot there. Haim Farhi, scion of an important Jewish family in Damascus, held sway over Acre for several decades under the rules of al-Jazzar and, later, Sulaiman Pasha, in spite of the fact that the Greek Catholic community was numerous there. The Bahri family did not succeed in its attempt to challenge Jewish predominance in Damascus.

Clearly, not all rulers appreciated the qualities of the Greek Catholics equally. But for those whose political ambition entailed the assertion of local autonomy and, hence, a challenge to the authority of the central government, as was the case with Zahir al-'Umar, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, and Amir Bashir II, the Greek Catholics were ideally suited for employment. Besides their skills, capital, and commercial expertise, the Greek Catholics possessed the typical *dhimmi* "quality" of weakness and lack of power base in a heightened and, in the political context, particularly appealing fashion. By constituting themselves into a Uniate community, the Greek Catholics had virtually become "outlaws" in the Ottoman Empire. Under the circumstances they were almost forced to identify with the political aims of the autonomy-seeking rulers. In contrast to the wide spatial spread of the recognized *millets*, the Greek Catholics' geographic distribution and trading network remained a regional one. They had neither the interest to influence matters in Istanbul nor the ability to seek protection from the central government against local authorities. Their hopes for autonomy as a community were best served by those rulers who aspired to achieve local autonomy for themselves. Basic to the harmonious cooperation between autonomy-seeking rulers and the Greek Catholics was their community of interest. Both were challenging – though in different ways – the authority of the central government and both shared common commercial interests centering on the trade with France.

On the other side were the officially recognized *millets* whose interests were supra-regional. They had their contacts and representation in Istanbul, and their strength and security derived ultimately from the authority of the central government.

The pattern of political alliances between official *millets* and pro-Ottoman rulers on the one side and between Greek Catholics and autonomy-seeking rulers on the other is well illuminated by the careers of the Greek Catholic Ibrahim as-Sabbagh (d. 1776) and the Jew Haim Farhi (d. 1821). In addition, their careers illustrate well the power and vulnerability of the *dhimmi* in court services at all times.

Though they were of different religions and served different masters in Acre, their backgrounds and careers show a striking similarity. Both came from well-to-do families. The Sabbaghs were merchants in Damiette, Acre, Sidon and Beirut. The Farhis were bankers in Damascus. Both men were highly educated. Ibrahim as-Sabbagh had received his schooling at the convent of Mar Yuhanna in ash-Shuwair, where he also studied Greek medicine.[96] Haim Farhi was known for his knowledge of the Talmud and his administrative skills.[97] As personal advisers to their respective masters, they won their confidence and wielded great economic and political power in the realm of their masters. Of Ibrahim as-Sabbagh it was said that *"les négocians (Français) d'Acre ne sont aujourd'huy que les facteurs ou les prête-noms d'Ibrahim Sebbag qui, s'étant emparé généralement de toutes les branches utiles du commerce, ne leur laisse que la triste satisfaction de s'agiter et de paraître faire beaucoup des des affairs tandis qu'ils ne travaillent que pour luy"*.[98] Ibrahim as-Sabbagh could offer to pay from his own money for Zahir al-'Umar two years of outstanding taxes to the Ottoman government. He was, like his successor Haim Farhi, highly involved in the political decisions his master took. The French were of the opinion that Haim Farhi *"sous le titre de sarraf du miri est le véritable commandant de toute la côte de Syrie."*[99] Ibrahim al-'Aura, intimately acquainted with the court of Sulaiman Pasha, ranked Haim Farhi after Sulaiman Pasha himself and his Katkhoda 'Ali Pasha.[100] A classical saying was applied to him: "He (Sulaiman Pasha) held the Syrian cow by its horns while the Jew was drinking its milk."[101] The powerful position and security Haim Farhi enjoyed was reflected in a speech that he, the *dhimmi*, could address to the Muslim *multazim* of Atlit:

> Every single one of you remains a donkey, who does not know anything about this world. When God, the Highest, bestowed His grace upon you and removed the horseshoes from your feet, you believed you had become something important. You sat in the meetings of wazirs and rulers and interfered in affairs that were none of your business. You opened your big mouth (*bajuq*) without discerning what came out of it...

The *multazim* felt it advisable to retire to Atlit and lie low for a while.[102] But in spite of their powerful positions, Ibrahim as-Sabbagh and Haim Farhi both suffered a violent end, once their masters either had been killed or withdrew their protection from them.

This similarity of careers should not, however, prevent us from observing important differences in the political positions of these two men, differences which reflected the interests of their respective communities and the political ambitions of

96 *al-Mashriq*, VIII (1905), 26.
97 Mishaqa 1955, 23, 33.
98 Ismail, II, 256 (de Taules 28/6/1772 Sidon, AEB 1035).
99 Ismail, IV, 414 (Guys 11/1/1813 Tripoli).
100 al-'Aura, 477.
101 Mishaqa 1955, 68.
102 al-'Aura, 249.

their masters. In the late 1730's, Zahir al-'Umar had invited Jews from Smyrna to settle in Tiberias in order to improve the local economy.[103] When Sulaiman Pasha al-'Azm, Wali of Damascus, decided to attack Zahir al-'Umar in 1742, the latter asked Haim Abula'fi, head of the Jewish community in Tiberias, to use the good offices of his coreligionists in Istanbul to win Ottoman support for Zahir al-'Umar in this crisis.[104] Once he was firmly established in Acre, however, Zahir al-'Umar's autonomy policies began to evolve and he came to rely increasingly on Greek Catholics, while Jews and Greek Orthodox played no role in the administration in Acre. In Ibrahim as-Sabbagh, he found an adviser who shared his localist views. Together with the Greek Catholics in Egypt, Ibrahim as-Sabbagh was instrumental in forging Zahir al-'Umar's alliance with 'Ali Bey al-Kabir. It would be going too far to claim that the Greek Catholics created this alliance, but it was certainly in their interest to see close political ties established between the two areas where they controlled much of the trade. Ibrahim as-Sabbagh financed 'Ali Bey al-Kabir's attempt to return to power in Cairo and helped coreligionists to gain influential positions in Egypt.[105] He agreed, with Zahir al-'Umar, to make use of the Russian fleet and sent a relative of his to establish contact with the Russians.[106] Ibrahim as-Sabbagh is reported to have said *"que l'Empire Ottoman n'existait plus, et qu'il n'y avait dans le monde qu'une seule nation, la Russie, comme un Dieu seul dans le ciel"*.[107]

After the fall of Zahir al-'Umar and the reestablishment of Ottoman authority the new Pasha, Ahmad al-Jazzar, purged the Greek Catholics from the upper ranks of administration and made two Greek Orthodox brothers, Mikha'il and Butrus Sakruj from Shafa 'Amr, his top advisers.[108] A brief interlude of administrative destabilization, which witnessed the dismissal, reinstatement, and execution of the Sakruj brothers and short-lived employments of other individuals, was ended by al-Jazzar in 1790 with the appointment of Haim Farhi as his permanent chief administrator. After al-Jazzar's death, Haim Farhi was taken over by the successor, Sulaiman Pasha, who, like his predecessor, was not a native of the area and never challenged the ultimate authority of the Ottoman government. Haim Farhi actively helped al-Jazzar to defend Acre for the Ottomans against Napoleon, while the Greek Catholics in Egypt had no hesitations about collaborating with the French. Of himself, Haim Farhi once said, "Yes, we are the servants of Sulaiman Pasha, but at the same time we are the slaves and servants of the Sultan's government..."[109] For Haim Farhi, Istanbul remained the center of power and his contacts there,

103 Heyd, 78.
104 *Ibid.*, 22–25.
105 as-Sabbagh, M., 90–96, 126.
106 *Ibid.*, 121.
107 Ismail, II, 307 (de Taules 16/8/1773 Sidon).
108 Shihab, 76, 88.
109 al-'Aura, 241.

thanks to his coreligionist, were solid. After the death of Sulaiman Pasha, he was able to convince the Ottoman government through the good offices of his coreligionist Hesekiel, *sarraf* for the government in Istanbul, to have his own protégé, 'Abdallah Pasha, appointed as governor of Sidon.[110] Even the violent end of Haim Farhi had a political aftermath which differed dramatically from the obscure murder of Ibrahim as-Sabbagh.[111] Haim's brothers and cousins in Damascus exerted their influence in Istanbul – probably through Hesekiel – and succeeded in having the government depose the governor of Sidon, who was responsible for the murder of Haim. Orders were given to Darwish Pasha of Damascus to launch a military campaign against him, which the Farhi family financed.[112] Though in the end the enterprise was not successful, it shows in a flash the "Ottoman dimension" of the Jewish community, which the Greek Catholics were lacking.

The struggle between the two communities assumed its most dramatic form in Egypt. Within a few short years it led to the complete downfall and impoverishment of the Jewish community, which did not recuperate until the nineteenth century with the arrival of new Jewish immigrants from abroad.

The first signs of future conflict can be detected in 1753–1754 when the Greek Orthodox Patriarch conspired, for his own reasons, with the all-powerful Jewish "*douaniers* of Bulaq", Yusuf Levi and Isaac Menasse, to have the Greek Catholics expelled from Egypt. As in Syria, the existence of the Greek Catholic community was a challenge to his authority and a threat to his revenues. Only the sudden death of Ibrahim Kakhya thwarted the attempt.[113]

By this time the Greek Catholic community was firmly established in Damiette and was gaining a base in Cairo and Alexandria. In the early 1760's we find one Greek Catholic, Mikha'il Jamal, described as *mu'allim ad-dawawin* and *multazim al-kamarik* under 'Ali Bey al-Kabir.[114] We do not know what precisely the position *mu'allim ad-dawawin* entailed, and if he was a *multazim* of customs it must have been in a subordinate rank, since the Jews were still firmly in control of the overall tax-farming of customs. But there is no doubt that he was a man of means and influence and a confidant of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, as we shall see presently.

The destruction of the Jews and final rise to power of the Greek Catholics was, however, triggered by a certain Mikha'il Fakhr, who belonged to neither of the two communities. He was one of the few Greek Orthodox Syrian immigrants about whom

110 Mishaqa 1955, 67.

111 It is not quite established whether Ibrahim as-Sabbagh was killed on board the ship bringing him to Istanbul or only after a longer stay and a certain success in Istanbul. The motive in either case was Hasan Pasha's fear that as-Sabbagh would reveal how much of his wealth had been confiscated by Hasan Pasha and had not been delivered to the Ottoman authorities (Mishaqa 1955, 8–9; Shihab, 71; as-Sabbagh, 'A., 39).

112 ad-Dimashqi, 750–752.

113 AN B^1 331; 43, 123, 148, 179.

114 as-Sabbagh, M., 90.

we hear during this period.[115] He lived in Damiette where there existed no Greek Orthodox community worth mentioning. As a wealthy merchant, he shared the interests of his Greek Catholic compatriots and must have collaborated with them at many occasions, though by no means always. By 1748 he had a monopoly of the rice trade in Damiette and French captains began to complain about his sales practices. The Egyptian authorities were amenable and suggested to the French consul that he should choose the next *multazim* for the rice trade in Damiette, but *"la difficulté est dans le choix. Il n'y a personne à Damiette qui mérite une sorte de confiance. Rien n'est plus pervers et plus corrompu que tous ces Grecs."*[116]

The consul suggested a certain Shammas Musa, a Maronite, who had brothers in Paris and Marseille and might therefore be more susceptible to French pressures. But Mikha'il Fakhr succeeded quickly in having Shammas Musa arrested and his property confiscated. Fakhr's power in Damiette remained unshaken.

In the following few years Mikha'il Fakhr played his cards well by collaborating closely with the Jewish custom officials in Bulaq, Yusuf and Isaac, who had great influence over Ibrahim Kakhya, the *Shaikh al-Balad* and virtual ruler of Egypt. *"Les Fermiers de la douane, qui sont deux Juifs pleins d'esprit et de subtilité, sont ses satellites. Ils ont acquis tant de pouvoir sur luy (Ibrahim Kakhya) qu'ils lui font faire le bien et le mal par un simple mot."*[117] When the French consul complained in 1753 to Ibrahim Kakhya that Mikha'il Fakhr cheated the French merchants in his rice deals, Fakhr could disregard these complaints because the Jewish customs officials defended him. In the same year, the Levantine merchant Lusignan visited Fakhr in Damiette and described him as the undercommissionary of customs, protected by Ibrahim Kakhya and favourite to 'Ali Bey.[118] In early 1755 Fakhr used his influence to have some French captains, who had been arrested after an incident in Damiette, released. He even paid considerable bribes to achieve their liberation. This was not done, as has been suggested,[119] because of his harmonious relations with the French, but because he feared that these arrests might keep French captains away from Damiette, or cause the French consul to demand permanent French representation in Damiette.[120] The French felt that he was their enemy.[121] A year later Mikha'il Fakhr took the first step to expand his power beyond Damiette by becoming a partner of the two Jewish *douaniers* of Alexandria.[122]

The golden opportunity to enhance his own power arrived after 'Ali Bey had been sent into exile by the Beys in Cairo. From Upper Egypt 'Ali Bey corresponded

115 Ibid., 91; Lusignan, 102/3.
116 AN B^1 328; 229.
117 AN B^1 330; 67. Cf. also B^1 330; 196.
118 Lusignan, vii.
119 Livingstone 1971, 223.
120 AN B^1 331; 216ff.
121 AN B^1 331; 446.
122 AN B^1 331; 399.

secretly with his protégé Mikha'il Jamal, asking him to provide him with cash, cloth and equipment. Fearing the Beys in Cairo, Jamal refused to help. Through a coreligionist Mikha'il Fakhr got wind of this affair and hastened to volunteer his own services to 'Ali Bey and to supply him generously with all he needed. It turned out to be a good investment. Upon his return to Cairo 'Ali Bey al-Kabir summoned Mikha'il Fakhr from Damiette and appointed him *mu'allim ad-dawawin*, while Mikha'il Jamal had to flee to Acre for his life.[123]

Fakhr was now in a position to turn against his sometime partners, the Jews. In 1768 he proceeded to denounce them before 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and accuse them of graft. Thereupon the Jews were removed from their positions in the customs, and several were executed. Mikha'il Fakhr was promptly made head of customs. As J. W. Livingstone has shown in his article, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir used the occasion to bleed the Jewish community dry by imposing a variety of *avanias* upon them. By 1771 the Jews were reduced to destitution.[124]

Livingstone's assumption, however, that this was a struggle between the Jewish and Greek Catholic communities and reflected the rivalry between the Venetian and French merchants, by whom the respective groups were supposedly protected,[125] cannot be sustained on two accounts. First, as we have seen, it was the Greek Orthodox Mikha'il Fakhr who brought about the downfall of the Jews and not the Greek Catholics, though their socioeconomic development in Egypt did bring them increasingly into competition with the Jews. Second, the Venetians might have attempt to help the Jews but there is no evidence of any collaboration between the French and the Greek Catholics in this conflict. As long as the Jews had been *douaniers* the French had cooperated with them for better or worse. On the personal level French merchants had no hesitation about dealing with Jewish merchants.[126] As late as 1773, Jews were employed by the French consul as dragomans. During the same time the consular records show no evidence that Greek Catholics

123 as-Sabbagh, M., 90–91.

124 The downfall of the Jews in Egypt could be felt as far as Jidda, where the local Jewish merchants and *sarrafs* were expelled to Yemen by Sharif Sarur (1773–1786) (Burckhardt, 1, 415). Though Burckhardt does not give any reasons, it can be assumed that with the collapse of the Cairene Jewry the commercial connections and credit-lines for the Jewish traders in Jidda vanished. Consequently, they did not constitute any more a source of bribes and revenues for the Sharif in Mecca, who was also controlling the seaport of Jidda.

125 Livingstone 1971, 222 sees – simplistically – an "undercurrent of Syrian Christian-Egyptian Jewish rivalry that reflected Franco-Venetian commercial rivalry". Gran, 11 takes this a step further when he declares that the Syrian Christians were serving "as proxy for French capitalism". Crecelius, 132 follows grosso modo the argument of Livingstone and adds the old erroneous belief that French merchants cooperated especially closely with local Catholics. In the case of Mikha'il Fakhr even this explanation would not make sense.

126 A list of 46 people with whom the French merchant Michel Dou did business in 1732 (AN B^1 321; 203) reveals that 15 were Muslims, 14 were Jews, 3 Armenians, and 3 Syrian Christians. The other names could not be definitely identified but were most likely Muslim.

were employed by the French.[127] Moreover, the French consuls in Egypt, just like their colleagues in Syria, were wary of being drawn by the Catholic missionaries into an untenable position which would require them to protect local Christian converts to Catholicism.

As we saw earlier, relations between the French merchants and the Greek Catholics in Damiette were tense because of the smuggling of French merchandise that took place in this port. The relationship with Mikha'il Fakhr in particular was characterized by hostility. He was considered *"l'ennemi declaré de la nation (française)"*.[128] His rise to power cannot have won the approval of the French, much less their active support.

Mikha'il Fakhr had overestimated his power on several counts. Though he enjoyed the confidence of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and could obtain for himself the position as a main tax-farmer of the customs, he did not have at his disposal an ethnic network of coreligionists whom he could appoint to the other positions in the customs and thereby ensure his control over this financial resource. From the beginning he had to rely on Greek Catholics to fill these positions. Yusuf Bitar assumed Mikha'il Fakhr's position in Damiette. Yusuf Zananiri, another Greek Catholic, was by February 1769 *"paltier général de la palte du séné"*, a Jewish sinecure until then.[129]

But the loyalty and interest of these individuals lay first and foremost with their own community. Very soon they succeeded in conspiring against Mikha'il Fakhr and having 'Ali Bey al-Kabir remove him from power. In the fall of 1771, Yusuf Bitar succeeded Mikha'il Fakhr as *douanier du Caire et de ses dépendences.*[130] Fakhr was sent into internal exile in Rosetta, from which he had later to flee to Venice.

The Greek Catholics could succeed in their attempt to eliminate Mikha'il Fakhr because of foreign alliances which 'Ali Bey al-Kabir was trying to create. In order to gain control over Syria he needed the support of Zahir al-'Umar in Acre, the other rebel against the Ottoman Empire. With Ibrahim as-Sabbagh being the counselor of the latter, the Greek Catholics were in a strong position to offer their good offices in striking this political alliance. Consequently Mikha'il Jamal, who had fled the wrath of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, was sent back from Acre with presents and received with all honors by 'Ali Bey who reappointed him as *mu'allim ad-dawawin*, though he had never hesitated to exterminate ruthlessly other former enemies.[131] Personally, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir might have appreciated the services Mikha'il Fakhr had rendered him in a moment of need. Politically, the network of the Greek Catholic community was of far greater importance to his foreign policy designs.

Economically, the Greek Catholics were the logical choice for the customs administration after the destruction of the Jews. They now were the richest com-

127 AN B^1 335; 85.
128 AN B^1 334; 322.
129 AN B^1 334; 48.
130 AN B^1 335; 16.
131 as-Sabbagh, M., 96.

munity and the only one able to provide the Egyptian government with substantial amounts of cash in return for the lucrative privilege of controlling the customs administration. In spite of the constantly precarious position of individual office-holders, and regardless of the changes in the Egyptian government, the Greek Catholics remained in control of the customs administration from then until the French occupation.

Neither a desire of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir to improve his relations with the French, nor an assumed close cooperation between the French and the Greek Catholics was at the root of the latter's rise to power. The growth of their ethnic network – something which Mikha'il Fakhr so noticeably lacked –, their importance at the court of Zahir al-'Umar and finally their wealth were the foundations of their success.

The motif of political alliances between official *millets* and pro-Ottoman rulers on the one hand and between Greek Catholics and autonomy-seeking rulers on the other is woven into the pattern of the rise and decline of these two communities during the eighteenth century. Wherever the interests of the two factions clashed, the fight was bitter. In Egypt the Greek Catholics were able – barely forty years after they first arrived – to destroy the power and wealth of the Jews and to assume during the rule of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir their traditional positions as douaniers and international merchants. Acre under the rule of the independent-minded Zahir al-'Umar had been the first power basis of the Greek Catholic community. When Acre reverted to Ottoman control under Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar Greek Catholic influence waned and the Jews under the leadership of Haim Farhi ascended to positions of power. Haim Farhi could neutralize, though not dislodge, the chief Arabic scribe, Hanna al-'Aura, since the latter had a long and close personal relationship with Sulaiman Pasha.[132] But Haim Farhi did succeed in having Mikha'il al-Bahri removed. The tensions between the powerful Jew and the lower-ranked administrators from among the Greek Catholics reflect themselves in the writings of Ibrahim al-'Aura, son of Hanna and, like his father, a scribe at the court of Sulaiman Pasha. His historical work concerning the period abounds with hostile comments about Haim Farhi and Jews in general.[133] When the Bahri family challenged the powerful position of the Farhi family in Damascus, Haim, through intrigues, engineered the downfall of 'Abbud al-Bahri. The Bahri family had to leave Damascus and flee to Egypt. They rose quickly to positions of importance in the administration of the autonomy-minded Muhammad 'Ali. It was a late triumph for the Bahri family when Hanna al-Bahri returned to Damascus in 1832 as chief administrator under the Egyptian occupation.[134] For the last time, the Greek Catholics had allied themselves with anti-Ottoman forces.

132 al-'Aura, 108–125.

133 *Ibid.*, 344, 383, 90, etc.

134 It is perhaps not incidental that he had an old synagogue in Damascus converted into a Greek Catholic Church (Bahri, 57).

C. THE GREEK CATHOLIC CONSOLIDATION IN EGYPT: THE GROWTH OF COMMUNAL STRUCTURES

The prospect of less religious intolerance and the attraction of commercial opportunities had been the dominant causes for Catholic emigration to Egypt, and it was only to be expected that the new arrivals should join the existing European Catholic community, which was served by the Franciscan Order in Cairo. In fact, it was the only possibility open to the Greek Catholics since their community in Syria was just beginning to organize its own institutional church and clergy. Greek Catholic priests were not yet available for the community in Egypt. In addition, the community was not recognized as an independent *millet*. Participating in church services held by the Franciscans was, however, also problematic. Legally, the Greek Catholics remained subjects of the Ottoman Sultan and could not claim the same status as the Catholic Europeans in the Ottoman Empire. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch tried to prevent any contact between the renegade members of his community and the European Catholics. In 1752 he procured an imperial order forbidding Christian subjects of the Sultan to attend European churches.

Yet in the end it was not government interference that prevented the Greek Catholics from using European churches. It was, rather, the increasing wealth and size of the community which intensified its assertiveness as it tried to emancipate itself from Franciscan tutelage. By 1772 the Pope had officially recognized the authority of the Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch over his community in Egypt, thereby withdrawing them from the tutelage of the Franciscans.[135] In the same year, the community in Cairo began to keep its own registers for baptism, marriage, etc. (Today, all the registers are located in the patriarchal archives in Fajjala, Cairo.) Two years later the Franciscans tried to reassert their waning control over the community, but to no avail.[136]

A sense of community made itself felt in Egypt among all Catholics from Syria (we are dealing here mainly with the Maronites and the Greek Catholics, since Chaldeans, Armenian Catholics and other groups were numerically and organizationally still quite insignificant). This sense of community expressed itself, on the one hand, in an attempt to throw off Franciscan control and, on the other hand, in a close – though by no means always harmonious – cooperation among the various Catholic communities. At the same time, each community strove to build up its own communal structure and religious hierarchy.

In Syria, the Maronites could look back on two centuries of close contact with Rome and a long, conscious effort to reorganize and revitalize the community and the clergy. The Greek Catholics were, at the same time, barely beginning to lay down the organizational foundation for their own community.

135 Basha 1933, 82.
136 AN B[1] 335; 177.

Though numerically far inferior to the Greek Catholics in Egypt, the Maronites were the first who attempted to establish their own clergy there. In 1745, the Maronite Lebanese Order sent its first member, Father Musa Hailana, to Damiette in order to organize the community there. Apparently this action came in response to a demand by the local Catholic communities in Damiette, who wanted "the spiritual functions to be fulfilled by *Eastern* (Catholic) priests, even if they were not of the same rite".[137] This "popular demand" was not necessarily a pious Maronite fiction to justify setting up a branch of the Order in Damiette, a town which could barely call a handful of Maronites its own. The far more numerous Greek Catholics might have made this demand, since they did not dare yet to use their own clergy in Egypt due to their "illegality" and due to Greek Orthodox pressures. Soon after his arrival, Father Musa Hailana succeeded in renting a building in Damiette to serve as a church for all Catholics.

The financing of this project reflected well the respective positions of the Maronites and Greek Catholics in Egypt: part of the money was raised by the local Greek Catholic merchants; the other part came from the Maronite Order in Lebanon. For the next forty years this arrangement seems to have worked very well. The Maronite Aleppine Order[138] provided Lebanese clergy for a community which was Greek Catholic.

The arrangement was thrown into disarray, however, after the appointment of the Maronite Father Butrus Zikreh (1784–1788) as priest for all Catholics in Damiette. The crisis was twofold. Soon after Father Butrus' appointment there arrived in Damiette a Franciscan, Brother Pancracius, sent from Jerusalem to look after the spiritual needs of Catholic sailors and merchants arriving from Europe. Seeing that his own Latin community was too small to provide a living for him, Pancracius proceeded to usurp functions in the local community which traditionally the Maronite clergy had fulfilled.[139] This resulted in sharp protests to Rome by the Catholic Syrians in Damiette and Lebanon. The Franciscans were ordered to withdraw their member from Damiette. Pancracius, however, refused and stayed until he died around 1791.

In 1787, Father Butrus was faced with a second crisis. He clashed with part of the Greek Catholic community over the marriage of a Greek Catholic girl. We do not know the details of the issue, and whether Butrus had truly given grounds for complaint. Perhaps the issue was a means for the Greek Catholics to express a more general dissatisfaction with the way the Maronite priest was conducting business

137 Emphasis mine. Khuri, 13; letter of Father Antun Yunan to head of Franciscans in Rome, June 12, 1789 published in Qar'ali II, 10.

138 The Maronite Order to St. Antun split in 1770 into two orders called the Lebanese Aleppine and the Lebanese Baladi orders. It was the former which continued to work in Egypt (Khuri, 18, footnote 1; Silbernagl, 328).

139 Khuri, 20ff.; Letter of Cardinal Antonelli to the head of the Lebanese Aleppine Order December 6, 1787 published in Qar'ali II, 7ff.: *"Arada an yada'a yadahu 'ala't-tujjar al-kathuliktiyin ash-sharqiyin."*

and the fact that his position had been weakened by the presence of the Franciscan. Probably the clash generally reflected the more self-assertive mood of the Greek Catholics after their recent rise to wealth and influence in the affairs of Egypt. As a result of this clash, the Greek Catholics successfully demanded of their Patriarch in Syria the right to have only Greek Catholic clergy attending to their spiritual needs.

The increased autonomy of the Greek Catholic community did not, however, lead to a permanent split with the Maronites. In 1789, an agreement was signed between the Maronite and the Greek Catholic priests under the auspices of the French consul arranging for cooperation between the two sides in Damiette. Under the terms of this agreement, all functions, revenues and expenditures were to be equally divided between the two clergies, as was the use of the church.[140] The cooperation between the Catholic communities proved itself in the crisis of 1797 when Murad Bey tried to have the church closed and extorted high ransom for some priests and merchants whom he had arrested. In a report by the Maronite priest of Damiette, Yusuf as-Sam'ani (1788–1808), to his Patriarch, Yusuf at-Tayyan, on December 23, 1797, he emphasized the importance of Greek Catholic support for their own and the Maronite clergy during this crisis. He mentioned the appreciation the Greek Catholic merchants had for him, as-Sam'ani, and pointed out in conclusion that Damiette is in the House of Islam, implying that such close cooperation among all Catholics is indeed needed. The letter is revealing with regard to another point. Apparently the Patriarch was highly dissatisfied that after the crisis with Murad Bey the church had been formally registered as property of the Greek Catholic San Salvadore Order and the Maronite Aleppine Order. The Patriarch resented not only the fact that the Greek Catholics now shared officially in the property, but also that it was registered in the name of the Maronite Order rather than the Maronite community (i.e., the Maronite Patriarch). In fact, the Patriarch threatened to dissolve the Order as "the Pope had dissolved the Jesuits". We find here the first indication of a clash which would occupy the communities much more intensely a century later: the question of authority over the community in Egypt or, in other words, whether Patriarchal clergy or the Order were entitled to hold control. A new dimension would be also added by the demands of the local community itself, usually represented by its secular leaders and interests.[141]

The close relations between the Catholic communities are also reflected in the issue of intermarriage, which occurred with some frequency. In 1797, the Greek Catholic and the Maronite Patriarchs in Syria issued an edict making patriarchal written permission a requirement for intermarriage. Because of the difficulties of communications with Syria, this made intermarriage in Egypt practically impossible. In response, some Maronite dignitaries from Damiette sent a letter pleading with their Patriarch to revoke this ruling because the Maronites in Damiette had a sur-

140 For a copy of this agreement see Khuri, 21–22; Qar'ali, II, 36–37.
141 For the letter by as-Sam'ani see Khuri, 39.

plus of young men and "because the habits in Egypt are different from those in Lebanon..."[142]

The awareness that Egypt presented different conditions from those in Lebanon, and that one found oneself in the "House of Islam", strengthened the ties among other Christians, not necessarily Syrian. In the case of the Syrian merchant al-Hajj 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, Copts and Christian Syrians worked together successfully to have him removed from Damiette. But here, too, a special relation seems to have existed among Catholics: When late in 1816 *mu'allim* Ghali, a Catholic Copt, was removed from his position as *ra'is al-kuttab* and thrown into prison for embezzlement,[143] the Maronite Father Antun Marun bewailed his fall from power as a catastrophe (*nakba*) for all Catholic communities whose friend he was. According to him, *mu'allim* Ghali had been most active in promoting the cause of the Catholic Copts. He had applied to Rome for the appointment of a Catholic Copt bishop, had supposedly obtained from the *'ulama'* a *fatwa* that all Coptic Church property should be evenly split between Catholics and Orthodox, and had caused the conversion of many Copts to Catholicism. His activities provoked the wrath of the Orthodox leadership, who proceeded to denounce him to Muhammad 'Ali for embezzlement as well as espionage and collaboration with foreign powers, a recurring accusation against local Catholics in the Ottoman Empire. The Orthodox Copts succeeded with their stratagem and one of their coreligionists replaced *mu'allim* Ghali as *ra'is al-kuttab*.[144] The fall of *mu'allim* Ghali did not, however, imply a general deterioration of the Catholics' position in Egypt.

As we have seen, there was no legal basis for the formation of the Greek Catholic community in the Ottoman Empire. It would therefore be futile to search for any

142 Khuri, 38. Statistical information on marriages in the Greek Catholic community in Cairo are only available since 1837. Between that date and 1900, 195 out of 776 registered marriages were with women from outside the Greek Catholic community (the woman as a rule followed the rites of her husband). 151 women came from other Catholic communities, 42 from Orthodox communities, i.e., Armenian, Coptic and Greek Orthodox; one woman was Jewish, one Protestant. The total annual number of marriages increased toward the end of the century but the percentage of intermarriages remains erratic and does not indicate a trend. It varies from one or no incident per year, as in 1853 one of eight, 1881 one of eleven, to more than 50 percent, as in 1844 eight of fourteen, 1858 four of eight, 1887 eleven of twenty, and 1891 ten of twenty-five. If any conclusion can be drawn from this for an earlier time, it would be that intermarriages occurred perhaps even more frequently than the above average of 27 percent, since the absolute size of the communities was smaller and, therefore, the need to find suitable partners outside their own community greater. Intermarriage with other Catholics is roughly three times as frequent as with members of the Orthodox churches.

143 He held this position with intermissions for ten years (al-Jabarti, III, 362; IV, 130).

144 Letter from Antun Marun to the Patriarch Yuhanna al-Hilu, Khuri, 86–69. Al-Jabarti, IV, 259 gives a slightly different account of the incident. According to him, the first initiative for the arrest of *mu'allim* Ghali came from the authorities themselves. A group of Copts (*ta'ifa min al-aqbat*) then exploited the situation, accusing him of additional embezzlement. Al-Jabarti is completely unaware of the sectarian dimension of this affair.

officially recognized organization or leadership such as the Greek Orthodox or Armenians possessed in their clergy. The priests who were brought from Syria to take care of the spiritual needs of the Catholics enjoyed no official status outside the community. They had come after the merchants had established themselves and remained materially dependent on the contributions of the local community members. Neither the Maronite nor the Greek Catholic Church in Syria attempted to organize their clergy in Egypt into a coherent local hierarchy.

The Greek Catholic community in Egypt had, of course, developed a sense of identity and group loyalty. This expressed itself most clearly in the fact that as soon as the first Greek Catholics had become *douaniers*, they brought as many of their coreligionists as possible into the customs administration, developing effective control over its operation. The geographical distribution of the Greek Catholics in Cairo is another indication of their group coherence as well as their place in Egyptian society. In the eighteenth century most lived in an area between al-Qantara al-Jadida and al-Muski Quarter, between the Coptic, Jewish and European Quarters and close to Khan al-Hamzawi, the center of Syrian commercial activities.[145]

We do not hear of any recognized *ra'is at-ta'ifa* or of any council of leaders, but it is evident that the rich merchants and *douaniers* constituted the leadership of the community. Their wealth assured them influence within the community, especially the *Grand Douanier* who was in a position to negotiate with authorities on behalf of his community. In 1774 the French consul wrote, *"les Douaniers ... sont à la Tête des Catoliques et par là se trouvent dans le cas de protéger ouvertement ou de leur propre goût ou pour se prêter à celuy des autres l'introduction et le maintien des Curés qu'ils ont appellés."*[146] Also, within the Egyptian society, the *Grand Douanier* was a man of consequence, *"Le Douanier est un chretien qui afferme les Douanes du premier Bey du Caire et qui est regardé comme un de principaux officiers de sa maison. Cette place lui donne un grand crédit principalement dans les Échelles d'Alexandrie, Rosette et Damiette où son autorité augmente en proportion de la puissance de commandant de l'Égypte. Sa protection a mis presque tout le commerce de Damiette entre le mains des Chretiens du pays."*[147]

Damiette was the power base of the Greek Catholic *Grand Douaniers*. Many of them had been local *douaniers* there before moving up to Cairo. Their power in Damiette seems to have been complete: *"Le commandant de Damiette et tous les autres officiers de la ville sont sous la dependence immediate du Grand Douanier du Caire."*[148] For this reason, the Greek Catholic *douaniers* also continued to resist any attempt to establish an official French representation in Damiette, for this might have limited their power and endangered their monopoly over the rice trade with the French captains.[149]

145 Raymond, II, 495–6.
146 AN B^1 335; 177.
147 AN B^1 336; 24–25.
148 Ibid.
149 AN B^1 336; 28.

From 1768 on, the administration of the customs remained firmly in the hands of the Greek Catholic community. But intense struggles took place within the community for the position of *Grand Douanier*, who was the customs director of Old Cairo and to whom the *douaniers* of the other ports were subordinate.

Mikha'il Fakhr enjoyed the fruits of his intrigue against the Jewish *douaniers* for barely three years. At the end of 1771 some Greek Catholics in Egypt conspired against him, and Yusuf Bitar, heretofore *douanier* of Damiette, was appointed in his place. For the next two and a half years he controlled the customs together with Mikha'il Jamal, an old rival of Mikha'il Fakhr. The latter lived in disgrace in Rosette until he was exiled to Venice in February, 1773. The authors of this move were most likely the *douaniers* in power, still fearing his intrigues and competition.[150] Their position was, according to a French report, challenged in the spring of 1774 by other members of the Greek Catholic community. But this attempt was thwarted.[151] In his function as *douanier*, Yusuf Bitar still dealt with the clash between the Franciscans and the Greek Catholic priests.[152] Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1774, both he and Mikha'il Jamal died.

Antun Qassis Fir'aun probably assumed the position as *Grand Douanier* not long after the death of his two predecessors. His name is mentioned in the French reports for the first time at the beginning of 1775 in connection with the trade agreement concluded between Abu 'dh-Dhahab and Warren Hasting concerning India trade to Suez by the English. Antun Fir'aun signed this agreement in his function as *Grand Douanier*.[153] He remained in his position for ten years until he fled, in 1784, to Europe. The immediate reasons for his flight are not known, but in general it can be assumed that his great wealth exposed him increasingly to the rapacity of the Mamelukes.[154]

His cousin, Yusuf Kassab, inherited his position as *Grand Douanier* and retained it until he was killed on September 22, 1790, by Isma'il Bey, who had accused him of collaborating with his enemies, Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey, who were at that time exiled to Upper Egypt. Mikha'il Kahil succeeded Yusuf Kassab by paying the government 20,000 riyals, and remained *Grand Douanier* until the French occupation of Egypt.[155]

150 AN B^1 335; 67.

151 AN B^1 335; 176–178.

152 Qar'ali II, 4 and above.

153 AN B^1 335; 275.

154 Volney, I, 209 ff. and Basha 1933, 134. The latter also gives the year 1790 as the date of Antun Fir'aun's departure, explaining that the assassination of his cousin, Yusuf Kassab, made him fear for his life. This explanation is patently wrong as a letter, reproduced by Basha himself, shows that Antun Fir'aun addressed in December, 1790, from Trieste, a letter to, among others, Yusuf Kassab in Cairo (*ibid.* 84).

155 Jabarti II, 188. *Ibid.* II, 158, gives also 29 Jumada ath-Thaniya 1202 as the date for the removal and possible killing of Yusuf Kassab. This seems erroneous not only because of Jabarti's subsequent statement but also in light of the letter mentioned above.

Antun Qassis Fir'aun was the *Grand Douanier* for the longest time and, despite the fact that he was only 26 when he assumed this position, seems to have been the unchallenged leader of the community. *"Leur chef et sans contredis le plus estimé de leur nation est Muallem Antoun Cassis,"* wrote Digeon in 1778.[156] One reason for his continued hold over the position of *Grand Douanier* was his strategy of appointing only his brothers and close relatives as heads of the local customs administrations. This reduced decisively the power base for any possible challenge from within the community to Fir'aun's position. Antun Fir'aun tried to legitimize his leadership role by constructing the first chapel for the community in Cairo, hiring a Greek Catholic priest, and donating a piece of land as a communal burial ground. There is no doubt that he could easily afford such expenses. Already in 1775 he could offer to buy the carriage and four horses which Abu 'dh-Dhahab had ordered in France, but whose delivery he did not live to see.[157] Nine years later Volney estimated his wealth to be about three million para.[158]

It is perhaps not incidental that the first mention of Antun Fir'aun's name in the French records is in connection with trade on the Red Sea. Only two years earlier Yusuf Bitar and Mikha'il Jamal had opposed any British proposal for trading on the Red Sea, fearing to expose themselves to the wrath of the Muslim merchants.[159] But Antun Fir'aun had no such hesitations and thus opened, for himself and his community, new commercial opportunities. Digeon commented in 1778, *"Plusieurs d'entre eux (les grèques catholiques) se sont enrichis dans cette profession (négociants) surtout depuis qu'ils on joint le commerce de la Sirie et de Djedda à celuy de Livourne."*[160] By that time a small community of Greek Catholics had indeed established itself in Livorno and conducted a brisk trade with coreligionists in Egypt; so much so that Volney felt it to be a serious threat to the French trade with Egypt.[161]

Antun Fir'aun's relations with the English, however, were somewhat dubious. He had helped negotiate the trade agreement between them and Abu 'dh-Dhahab in the spring of 1775. But the sudden death of the latter soon afterward and the subsequent upheaval discouraged the English and they withdrew completely from Egypt. In late 1775, the British ambassador in Istanbul conferred on Antun Fir'aun the power to protect all British subjects and to represent British interests in Egypt. Antun Fir'aun became de facto consul for the British in Egypt.

His position was challenged two years later by the merchant-adventurer Baldwin who had come to Cairo trying to set up trade with India via the Red Sea. In early

156 AN B^1 336; 211 (Digeon, "Notice sur l'Egypte", May, 1778).
157 AN B^1 335; 311.
158 Volney, I, 209.
159 AN B^1 335; 165.
160 AN B^1 336; 210. Cf. also Raymond, I, 155, who quotes Mure, AN Alexandrie B, 122, September, 1781: *"Ils se sont emparés de tout le commerce qui se fait avec l'Inde et l'Arabie par la Mer Rouge."*
161 Volney, I, 125.

1779, Antun Fir'aun's privileges were revoked by the British ambassador and Baldwin proceeded to bring the first shipload of Indian merchandise by caravan from Suez to Cairo. The caravan was plundered by Bedouins. In his report to the ambassador, Baldwin implicated Antun Fir'aun in this deed. Fir'aun must have known that neither the East India Company nor the Ottoman government would care very much whether English trade developed in the Red Sea. Baldwin's suspicion was probably well-founded, since the plundering of the caravan once more aborted all possibility of direct British commercial activity in the area, leaving local merchants in control of the Red Sea trade. Besides, all the plundered merchandise ended up in the warehouses of Antun Fir'aun, who made a handsome profit.[162]

It must be pointed out, however, that the customs of Qusayr and Suez were never in the hands of the Syrians. Qusayr's customs revenues belonged to the Beys of Upper Egypt. Initially, Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey had shared the customs revenues of all other ports. After a dispute, Ibrahim Bey obtained control over Suez, while the revenues of the other ports went to Murad Bey. Only the latter sold the rights for customs collection as a tax-farm. Ibrahim Bey, in contrast, had the customs of Suez administered directly by his own people, thus preventing the entrance of the Syrians as tax-farmers.[163] It is therefore unlikely that the Syrians had such a hold over the Red Sea trade as described by Mure.

Mikha'il Kahil, the last Greek Catholic *Grand Douanier*, was also involved in Red Sea trade in addition to his commercial connections with Syria.[164] His leadership role as *"chef des négociants de Damas au Caire"* and *"chef de la Nation des Damasquins"*[165] was officially acknowledged when the French made him one of the two representatives of the Greek Catholics in the 14-member special *diwan* which they established December 16, 1798.[166]

In the last third of the eighteenth century the Greek Catholic community in Egypt, though not a legally recognized group, had formed its own cohesive body. Its socioeconomic status was that of a class of international merchants who also held in their hands powerful control over Egypt's customs administration. The community had developed its own leadership, informal but nevertheless clearly recognizable – a secular leadership which consisted of the wealthiest merchants and in particular the one who held the office of *Grand Douanier*. In 1802 we even hear of a regular election of three from among the Greek Catholic merchants in Cairo, who were to represent the community in all dealings with the government.[167] In view of the fact that the formal criteria of self-identification in the community were reli-

162 Girard, 679.
163 Charles-Roux 1922, 103, 111, 141; Charles-Roux 1951, 7.
164 Raymond, I, 155; Jabarti, III, 70.
165 Raymond, II, 496.
166 Jabarti, III, 37.
167 The three elected were Yusuf Farhat, Yusuf b. Jibra'il Kahil, Yusuf al-Qarisati. Niqula Turk wrote a panegyric for the occasion of their election (al-Bustani, 23).

gious, it is remarkable that the role of the clergy and the church was so very subordinate. This apparent contradiction can be understood only in the light of the causes which had led to the genesis of the community in Syria – causes, as we have argued earlier, which were predominantly of a socioeconomic and political nature and which were provided formal expression by the symbolism of a new religious affiliation.

The Greek Catholics in Egypt had originally established their economic basis in Damiette with trade to Syria and smuggling of French merchandise. After 1768 their control over Egypt's customs was in itself a source of wealth. To this must be added the penetration of the Red Sea trade and, apparently, an intensification of trade with Livorno. Undoubtedly, the community prospered during the last third of the century. Travelers remarked repeatedly on their wealth and its ostentatious display, "The Christian merchants of Syria, established here, make such a prodigal and ostentatious display of wealth, that it lessens our wonder at the extortions of the Beys. At one of their weddings, five hundred chickens were served up every day, and other articles in proportion. This fête lasted ten successive days. The presents to the singers were said to have amounted to fourteen hundred mahbubs."[168] Girard, of the French Expedition, calculated the average net income of the *Grand Douanier* (most likely he had Mikha'il Kahil in mind) to be about 334,000 francs or almost 9.5 million para – a sum which omits the profits of his private commercial enterprises.[169]

But in spite of their increased wealth, or perhaps just because of it, the position of the Greek Catholics in Egypt remained precarious. Their lack of even *dhimmi* status made the Catholics an easy target for extortions; their wealth made them a temptation. At mid-century Ibrahim Kakhya had exacted heavy payments from the Greek Catholics, accusing them of illegal organization and church services. Murad Bey used the same approach to extort money.

168 Browne, 165. Volney, I, 209, expresses similar fears of inviting extortions from the Beys by conspicuous consumption.

169 Girard, 68, gives the following account:

Annual expenditures of the Grand Douanier

Salaries for *douanier* of Bulaq	216.000 para
Salaries for *douanier* of Damiette	360.000 para
Salaries for *douanier* of Rosette	90.000 para
Salaries for *douanier* of Alexandria	360.000 para
For 29 scribes at an average of 63.000 per person	1.827.000 para
For 170 employes at an average of 16.425 per person	2.792.250 para
Estimated cost, bribes, presents, etc.	5.436.450 para
Payment to Murad Bey for tax farm	22.680.000 para
Total costs	33.761.700 para
Total revenues from all customs	43.200.000 para
Net Income of *Grand Douanier*	9.438.300 para

Under 'Ali Bey al-Kabir the fortunes of the Greek Catholics had improved. But his policy was not determined by any particular tolerance toward non-Muslims or, specifically, Syrian Christians. The fact that he filled many high offices, especially in the customs, with Greek Catholics did not mean that the community or even the individual office-holders enjoyed greater security. In fact they were easily replaceable, just as were the Coptic or Jewish office-holders.[170] 'Ali Bey al-Kabir made use of this policy, as well as Ibrahim Bey who in 1790 had his head of customs, Yusuf Kassab, drowned for alleged conspiracy with Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey.[171]

Personal insecurity was not, of course, limited to the Christian Syrians. Coptic functionaries were equally exposed to a sudden fall from power and confiscation of their property.[172] The measures taken by the authorities against individual office holders, though, should not be mistaken as expressions of a general policy of hostility toward one community or another. Rather, these were attempts to extract money from individuals who usually had enriched themselves enormously while serving the government. Indeed, fallen functionaries were usually replaced by members of their own community. But this again should not be understood as a preferential attitude by the government toward any particular community. High functionaries would usually try to fill as many other positions as possible with their co-religionists. Rather than indicating specific governmental policies toward minorities, the fact that certain offices were held again and again by members of the same community shows the strenuous effort of these communities to keep lucrative and influential offices in their control.

The security of the individual and the community depended basically on the inclinations of the ruler, as had been the case traditionally. The extent of foreign protection the Greek Catholics might have enjoyed should not be overestimated. It is true that when Murad closed the church of Damiette in 1797, French interference was able to restore the church to the community after intercession with the Ottoman government in Istanbul.[173] But since the French in Egypt often felt themselves threatened by the commercial activities of the Greek Catholics, such help was not provided very often. Also, personal *berats* seem to have been of dubious value, as the fate of Antun Fir'aun shows. He had obtained the title of Count from the Habsburgian emperor and with it imperial diplomatic protection,[174] yet he did not feel safe enough to stay on in Egypt.

Antun Fir'aun's departure from Egypt with his family and wealth must have been a serious blow to the Greek Catholic community. His departure occurs precisely at the beginning of the period which Raymond has called *"la crise de la fin*

170 Livingstone 1971, 225.
171 Jabarti, II, 188.
172 E.g., *mu'allim* Ibrahim al-Jauhari (Jabarti, II, 120, 262); or *mu'allim* Ghali (Jabarti, IV, 242).
173 Khuri, 26.
174 Basha 1933, 92.

du siècle". The crisis was created by a combination of bad harvests, deterioration of internal security, disintegration of political rule accompanied by internal strife, and ever-increasing extortions from the various economic sectors.[175] The violent death of Yusuf Kassab was only one result of this internal crisis, but it demonstrated to the Greek Catholics – as did the various extortions – how precarious their position had become. An even more ominous blow was Murad Bey's unsuccessful attempt in 1796 to take the customs administration away from the Greek Catholics altogether and give it to Muslim officials who were directly responsible to him. Perhaps this attempt was inspired by the example of Ibrahim Bey's direct customs administration in Suez.[176]

"La crise de la fin du siècle" also meant a decline of the Greek Catholic community not only in terms of power and wealth but also in size. This can be validated by the baptism register of the community, where the annual number of births declined dramatically in the 1790's, suggesting a numerical decline of the community probably caused by emigration from Egypt just before the arrival of the French in Egypt.

When the French came, the Greek Catholics had no difficulty collaborating with them and supporting them politically. Mikha'il Kahil opened his house in Cairo to the French officers. He and Yusuf Farhat were made the Greek Catholic representatives in the *diwan* created by the French.[177] Upon the suggestion of Venture de Paradis the head of customs in Alexandria, Ilyas Fir'aun, became the personal translator of Bonaparte and accompanied the latter to Syria. After Venture de Paradis' death there, he became head translator and retained this position also under Kléber. In 1803 he went to Paris.[178] 'Abbud b. Ibrahim as-Sabbagh was secretary of the *diwan* in Cairo for seven months until he was killed in the second uprising against the French.[179] His nephew Mikha'il worked for General Reynier in Egypt and followed him to France.[180] Father Rufa'il and Ilyas Fakhr worked as translators and were appointed by Menou as official translators to the *diwan* of Cairo. Jibra'il at-Tawil, Jibran Sakruj, and Ilyas Lutfallah also worked as translators for the French.[181] Antun Zaghib and Hanna 'Atiya, two Greek Catholic merchants from Damiette, accompanied General Beauvoisins on his mission to Acre for negotiations with Ahmad al-Jazzar. Both were killed by the Pasha.[182]

175 Raymond, I, 100–102.

176 Browne, 163–165, gives in 1796 the impression that the dismissal of the Greek Catholics is final. But we find, for instance, in 1798 Ilyas Fir'aun serving as *doumier* of Alexandria. All other evidence also points to the fact that the Greek Catholics regained their positions (Basha 1933; Motzki, 244).

177 Jabarti, III, 37.

178 Basha 1933, 113–115.

179 Turk, 83.

180 See Shaikhu for his life and his family.

181 as-Sawi, 263–265.

182 Turk, 33–34.

Economically, however, the French occupation spelled disaster for the Greek Catholics, whose major source of wealth was destroyed when the Mediterranean trade was disrupted by the British maritime blockade against French-occupied Egypt. In addition, it has been calculated that during the occupation the Greek Catholics had to pay more than 1.5 million francs to the French army in the form of forced contributions, deliveries of supplies on credit, and loans (all of which were not repaid).[183] The Greek Catholics also suffered severe losses during the uprising of the Cairene population against the French.[184]

Initially, the Greek Catholics maintained their control over tne customs and even expanded it to include Qusayr.[185] But in 1800 Menou abolished the tax-farming of the customs and appointed French officials as custom administrators, thus ending more than thirty years of Greek Catholic control over the customs in Egypt.

The economic power of the Greek Catholics in Egypt had reached its peak in the early 1780's. Decline set in with the crisis of the end of the century and was accelerated during the French occupation. All this does not imply that the Greek Catholic community became destitute. Wealthy individuals and families continued to exist. But never again were the Greek Catholics to wield as much economic power in Egypt as they did during their tenure as *douaniers*.

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While relatively speaking there is a great deal of information available concerning the development of the Christian Syrian communities in Egypt, the same cannot be said with regard to the Muslim Syrians in Egypt. During the whole period under discussion, religious affiliation remained the primary principle of identity. For this very reason we find the Christian Syrians establishing their own distinct organizations, hierarchies and records, while the Muslim Syrians blended easily into the local Muslim environment.[186] The Muslim Syrians were distinct enough as a group

183 Motzki, 245.

184 In the Archives Historiques du Ministère de la Guerre at Vincennes we find a list of all the Catholics in Cairo whose houses were burned during the riots. A total of 143 houses were burned. At least 32 belonged to persons who were certainly Greek Catholics from Syria. The number would about double if we include those who cannot be identified with absolute certainty as Syrian Greek Catholics but in all likelyhood are (B 6/45 June 14, 1800). I am indebted to A. Raymond for showing me this list.

185 *Ibid.*, 244, enumerates for 1798–99 the following *douaniers:* Francesco Saifi for Old Cairo, Thomas (Dawud) and Jibra'il Barakat for Bulaq, Ilyas Fakhr for Rosette and Jirjis A'idi for Damiette. For 1799–1800 Antun Dibani is listed as *douanier* for Old Cairo and Qusayr. Motzki's claim that in Alexandria the Greek Catholics had lost control over the customs already some years earlier seems incorrect.

186 The same holds true to a large degree for the Greek Orthodox Syrians who were made part of the local Greek Orthodox community. They are, therefore, much more difficult to trace. It seems, however, that until the time of Khedive Isma'il the number of Greek Orthodox Syrians remained negligible in Egypt.

to merit a *riwaq* in al-Azhar similar to that of the Maghribi, Turkish and Hijazi students. Syrian Muslim merchants in Cairo clearly gravitated to specific markets, the Khan Masrur in the fifteenth century, Khan al-Hamzawi and the Jamaliya quarter in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[187] But it remains open to question whether this concentration occurred primarily because of a common origin or because of the specific merchandise the Syrians dealt in, for instance textiles in Khan al-Hamzawi.

Both merchants and students could act, on occasion, to defend their interests as any professional group would do.[188] We rarely hear of actual differences between Muslim Syrians and Egyptians. One such occasion arose when the Hanafi *shaikh* 'Abd ar-Rahman al-'Arishi tried to become Shaikh al-Azhar in the autumn of 1779. An opposition group from the Shafi'i school complained that the Shaikh al-Azhar had never been a Hanafi and nobody from far away (*afaqi*) who was not Cairene (*min ahl al-balda*) was ever made Shaikh al-Azhar. Al-Jabarti notes that al-'Arishi was supported in his struggle by the Syrian community (*ta'ifat ash-shuwam*),which obviously included more than just students, "because of their nationality" (*jinsiya*).[189]

Beyond that we have very little evidence that Muslim Syrians had the sense of shared identity or mutual loyalty that would have given them coherence as a group. Each year the Syrian merchant al-Hajj 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Wahhab from Damiette invited many of the Syrian al-Azhar students to pass the month of Ramadan at this residence.[190] Syrian students' unrest at al-Azhar was reflected occasionally by shop closings. Whether such action included merchants in general or was a specific sign of solidarity among the Syrian merchants remains open to speculation.[191]

Even more spurious is any evidence for a sentiment of community among Christian and Muslim Syrians. The only hint we can possibly find is the fact that both Christian and Muslim merchants did business in the same markets. But again it must be asked whether it was common origin or similarity of merchandise that drew the Syrians together. Since there were other markets for textiles, such as Khan al-Khalili, one is inclined to see their Syrian origin as a factor bringing Muslims and Christians together.

But on the whole the mode of relationship between the two groups was one of competition – competition for the same markets, trade routes and merchandise. As the Greek Catholics from Syria established their control over commerce in Damiette and came to Cairo, they slowly eliminated their Muslim compatriots from Egypt

187 Raymond, II, 480.

188 Jabarti, II, 51; IV, 164.

189 Jabarti, II, 53–54. al-'Arishi lost out in the end because he had antagonized the (Turkish) authorities when he covered up for Syrian students who had attacked students from the *riwaq al-atrak*. Again, al-Jabarti explains the siding of the authorities with the Turkish students by their sentiment of *jinsiya*.

190 Jabarti, II, 90.

191 Jabarti, II, 174.

who had heretofore controlled the Syrian–Egyptian trade. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Syrian merchants in Khan al-Hamzawi – traditionally the market for Syrian merchandise in Cairo – had all been Muslims, but by 1760 the market was almost exclusively in the hands of Christian merchants from Syria.[192] A similar shift of power can be observed in Damiette where in 1769, for example, the merchant al-Hajj 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Wahhab from Tripoli, Syria, lost an argument with Christian merchants. The case was brought to court in Cairo, but through pressure exerted by Christian (Copt as well as Greek Catholic) secretaries and functionaries, the ruling went against 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Wahhab. His property was confiscated and he and his family were sent back to Tripoli.[193] Even under the French occupation there were still signs of hostility between Christian and the by then much-weakened Muslim merchants from Syria.[194]

D. THE SYRIAN NEIGHBOURS: RELATIONS WITH THE EGYPTIAN SOCIETY

The last question which demands investigation is the relationship between the Syrians and Egyptian society. The Egyptians called the Syrians *shuwam* (sing. *shami*), people from *ash-Sham*, which could mean either Syria in general or Damascus in particular. In similar fashion people were called *Maghribi* or *Hijazi*, designating their place of origin. But the term *Shami* itself does not help us much beyond pointing out a general awareness of geographical differences of origin, which might lead to some special commercial ties or an organization of students at al-Azhar. The term *Shami* is used for everybody from Syria, and only from the context does it become evident whether Christian Syrians, Muslim Syrians, specifically people

192 Raymond, II, 495.

193 Jabarti, II, 90–91, does not mention whether the *dhimmi* merchants with whom 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Wahhab had an argument were Syrians or Copts. It is most likely, however, that they were Christian Syrians since they, not the Copts, engaged in trade in Damiette. The fact that it was the Copt, *mu'allim* Rizq, who engineered the exile of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Wahhab is indicative of the former's powerful position, which he used to protect the Christians in general. When the Greek Catholic functionaries Mikha'il al-Jamal and Yusuf Bitar later specifically opposed the return of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Wahhab to Damiette, it seems that they were protecting the interests of Greek Catholics there. Then *mu'allim* Rizq together with 'Ali Bey al-Kabir went into exile to Acre. There together with Ibrahim as-Sabbagh he managed the financial aspects of 'Ali Bey's disastrous attempt to return to Egypt. On the other side was the Orthodox Copt al-Jauhari, chief secretary of Abu 'dh-Dhahab (as-Sabbagh, M., 129–133).

194 Jabarti, III, 15.

from Damascus, or Syrians in general are meant.[195] Despite the use of the same term, the attitude of the Egyptians toward the Syrians differed profoundly according to the Syrians' religious affiliation, which is to be expected since at that time society on the whole identified itself in religious terms first.

Al-Jabarti's chronicle provides many examples of how Copts, Christians from Syria, Greek Orthodox and European Christians were all lumped together in one category. Al-Jabarti never distinguishes among the various Christian Syrian sects, just as he was unaware of an internal struggle in the Coptic community between Catholic and Orthodox factions.[196] Perhaps the most dramatic description of this deep split between Muslim and *dhimmi* can be found in al-Jabarti's account of the feverish preparations of the Cairenes to defend themselves against the approaching French. Collections of food, money, and weapons were made and "at that moment nobody held back anything of what he owned". Some people "equipped groups of Maghribis and Syrians (*shuwam*) with weapons, food, etc." In this moment of emergency, feelings of solidarity also embraced all the non-Egyptian Muslims. On the other hand, "people searched the houses of the Syrian (*shuwam*), Coptic and Greek Orthodox Christians, as well as their churches and monasteries for weapons. The masses would have been content only with killing the Christians and the Jews. But the authorities prevented them from doing so."[197] All Christians, whether indigenous or from abroad, were equally suspect, while Muslims from everywhere cooperated to defend the city. This was admittedly a time of great crisis, and the threat posed by non-believers might, therefore, have aroused particularly intense feelings of Muslim solidarity. But even in less heroic times relations between Egyptian and Syrian Muslims seem to have been, by and large, quite close and regular.

Relations between the Christian Syrians and Egyptian society were determined by the overall relations between Muslims and Christians in Egypt at the time. Both government regulations in areas such as clothing, housing, and police protection and popular expressions of distrust, harrassment, looting, etc. usually put all *dhimmis* in the same category. There was no differentiation between indigenous and immigrated Christians, Egyptian society cared little for the differences among various Christian denominations.

Popular sentiment against the *dhimmis* took severe forms during the French occupation when, at least twice, the mob of Cairo took over, plundering the houses of Christians and killing many of them. Long before the French occupation, resentment against the Christians could be sensed. Al-Jabarti deplored the fact that "the Christians' position has risen...". Upon his takeover of Cairo in August, 1786,

195 Qar'ali, I, 106, and Basha 1933, 76, err when they claim that the term *Shami* was only applied to all Syrians after a substantial immigration of Greek Catholics from Damascus in the 1750's; see, for instance, Ibn Iyas, II, 264, or the use of the term *riwaq ash-shuwam*, which most likely goes back to the fifteenth century.

196 Cf. p. 38; Jabarti, II, 90; III; 190; IV, 280.

197 Jabarti, III, 6–7.

Hasan Pasha, the Ottoman admiral, issued regulations forbidding Christians to ride, to have Muslim slaves, and to wear other than their traditional garb. This was not only an attempt to establish traditional law and order but also, most likely, a response to public sentiment.

Mob action against *dhimmis*, however, occurred only during the time of the French occupation, indicating the severity of the crisis and the tenuous control the French had over the population. Muslim rulers probably considered it their privilege to extort great sums of money from *dhimmi* merchants and functionaries. This was a step directed not so much against the community as against rich individuals - a category which often included Muslim merchants. Never did such an attitude, however, induce the rulers to condone mob action against the *dhimmis*. Such popular action might easily have become uncontrollable. "Law and order" meant not only that the *dhimmi* should submit to the rules and regulations restricting his life, but also that his security was guaranteed. Certainly, the populace could not be permitted to take the law into its own hands. Hasan Pasha combined his restrictive measures against the Christians with a declaration that they should not be molested.[198] On the eve of the French occupation of Cairo, the authorities prevented the population from attacking the *dhimmis*. During the second uprising in Cairo, 'Uthman, the representative of the Ottoman government, denounced all action against the Christian subjects of the Sultan as crimes and sent troops to all Christian quarters to guard them.[199] When the Ottomans reentered Cairo after the final departure of the French, one of the first orders issued was a prohibition to harm any *dhimmis* "whether they are Copts, Greek Orthodox or Christian Syrians, since they are subjects of the Sultan". At the same time, the Christians were ordered to wear only their traditional blue and black attire.[200]

We have already had occasion to observe how, in a moment of crisis, suspicion toward the *dhimmis* was all-pervasive. During the riots of the Cairene population against the French occupation in 1798, Khan al-Milayat and the Jawwaniya quarter, mainly inhabited by Greek Orthodox and Syrian Christians, were ransacked.[201] When the French evacuated Cairo for the first time, the anger of the population, a

198 Jabarti, II, 115.

199 Turk, 101–2.

200 Jabarti, III, 190–1.

201 Turk, 24. Jabarti, III, 25, tries to deemphasize the religious connotation of this mob action by making only the riffraff (*zu'r*) of the city responsible and by pointing out that houses of Muslims were also plundered, but it seems that these houses were plundered rather incidentally because they were neighbouring the Christian quarter. The original direction of the rioting clearly pointed toward the Christian quarters.

result of two years of accumulated frustrations and humiliation, found an outlet in the form of extensive mob action against all Christians.[202]

But if the Muslim population was hostile toward the Christians, it seems that the latter justified such feelings. That is to say they shared with the Muslims a world view which determined loyalties and identity through religious affiliation. The Christians in Cairo saw in the French occupiers their natural protectors. They identified with the French cause,[203] collaborated with them frequently, and exploited the weak position of the Muslims.[204] A local Greek, a certain Bartholomy, was made chief of police by the French. Coming from the lowest class of the population, "he paraded with his retinue ... on his head a headgear of coloured silk, dressed in a fur ... in front of him servants with silverplated spears ...". This sight outraged even such a sober observer as al-Jabarti.[205] The French themselves must have sensed the inappropriateness of such behavior, especially at a time when they were still trying to win the sympathies of the local Muslim dignitaries. The Christians were forced to return to their traditional clothing, wearing black or blue turbans rather than their recently acquired white turbans and colorful cashmere shawls.[206]

Some Maronites had actually come together with the French forces having been hired in Rome to serve as translators for the French.[207] Other Syrian Christians joined the French as translators in Cairo.[208]

The position of the French in Egypt soon became precarious. After a first evacuation agreement had failed, the French, under General Kléber, reestablished themselves in Cairo. Short of manpower, and finding themselves in extremely hostile surroundings, they did not hesitate to employ local Christians in their army. There seems to have been no difficulty in attracting Christians. A certain Copt, Ya'qub as-Sa'idi, recruited an auxiliary corps of some 800 Copts who were put into French uniforms. The small Greek contingent, built up earlier under the command of Bartholomy, was now expanded to some 1500–2000 troops under their commanders Nicolas and Yanni. Finally, a troop of some 100 Christian Syrians was organized under the leadership of Yusuf Hamawi. Most of the latter group had come to Egypt with the French retreat from Syria.[209] Greeks from abroad had already served –

202 Measures were also taken against individual Muslim collaborators (Turk, 101 ff.). Jabarti does not mention these events directly but records the order of the Ottoman authorities prohibiting all excesses against Christians and Jews. In addition, soldiers were posted at all Christian quarters (Turk, 102).

203 Jabarti, III, 27.

204 *Ibid.*

205 *Ibid.*, III, 11–12.

206 *Ibid.*, III, 45.

207 Qar'ali, I, 89 lists three names: Ilyas Fathallah, Yusuf Masabiki, Shami Mashhara.

208 The Greek Catholic Father Antun Rufa'il Zakhur, for instance (ash-Shayyal, 74).

209 Turk, 111–114, 134. Jabarti, III, 115, gives 2,000 Copt recruits; see also *ibid.* 187; Politis, I, 133–137.

after converting to Islam – in small numbers under Murad Bey in the artillery corps and the navy. But it was a clear sign of the overturn of the old order to see *dhimmis* in large numbers serving as regular soldiers.[210]

By taking up arms and joining the occupation forces, the *dhimmis* had completely committed themselves to the French cause. Little wonder then that all the commanders of the auxiliary troops, their associates, and many other local Christians left Egypt together with the final French withdrawal in July, 1801. Among the Greek Catholics alone, some 500 left with the French.[211]

This emigration of Syrian Christians from Egypt was the dramatic result of the inner contradictions and weaknesses of their position in Egypt. They had gained wealth and power in the first place because of their position as a minority. This same vulnerability made them constantly dependent on the good will of the rulers. Their self-image as a Christian minority and Egyptian society's perception of them as outsiders drove them into collaboration with the French authorities, in spite of the fact that the French occupation spelled economic disaster for them. Bonaparte himself had recognized astutely the limited room minorities had for maneuvering when he wrote to Kléber: "Whatever you do, the Christians will remain our friends."[212] But after associating themselves with the French, many Greek Catholics (and other Christians) found it perilous to stay in Egypt once the French left. In the wake of the French withdrawal, the Greek Catholic community was left numerically reduced, politically discredited and economically impoverished. The community had reached a low point which signified indeed the end of a first major phase in their historical development.

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Formation and migration of the community had been followed in the second half of the eighteenth century by a phenomenal rise to positions of both wealth and power in southwest Syria as well as in Egypt. But while the Greek Catholics continued to develop a communal structure and identity, they were unable to hold on to their powerful positions in the economy and politics of the area. In Syria their

210 Politis, I, 89–91. Bartholomy and Nicolas had both served under Murad Bey, Nicolas as the commander of the Greek marines. Both had transferred their loyalties very easily to the French (*ibid.*, 116–120, 125–129). After the withdrawal of the French, many Greek soldiers seemed to have little trouble working for the Ottomans again: "The strangest thing was that some Greek Orthodox Christians who had served in the French army now put on Ottoman uniforms and equipped themselves with weapons and heavy knives, became part of them (the Ottomans), acted haughtily, offended Muslims in the streets with beatings and insults in Turkish, and in their insults called the Muslims 'French infidel'. Only the very astute observer could have discerned them (to be Greek Orthodox and not Ottomans), be it then that he knew them from before." (Jabarti, III, 190).

211 Turk, 134; Jabarti, III, 182; Qar'ali, I, 92.

212 Correspondance, 4374.

downfall began in 1776 with the end of Zahir al-'Umar's rule in Acre. In Egypt their positions became increasingly precarious by the late 1780's. The French occupation dealt them a fatal blow.

Considering the reasons for this rapid decline of the Greek Catholic community, it is necessary to recall the circumstances of their rise. Autonomist tendencies in Syria and Egypt resulting from the weakness of the central government and the French economic penetration of Syria were the conditions under which the Greek Catholics could begin their rise. Their close ties to local production made them the ideal middlemen for French trade in Syria. Their restriction to Syria and Egypt as well as their lack of connections and protection in the Ottoman capital made them most suitable for employment by autonomy-minded local rulers.

But the autonomist tendencies of the eighteenth century should not be misunderstood as a departure from the traditional patterns of society and politics. Even where, as with 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and Zahir al-'Umar, genuine power was centralized in the hands of one ruler, this was not the result of any different, more efficient, or "modern" organization of power and society. It was the result of personal political dexterity on the part of rulers, taking advantage of the Ottoman government's weakness.

The case of Zahir al-'Umar deserves special mention because the territory under his rule was the first in the Middle East to be firmly integrated into the world economy, as the French demand for cotton and silk converted local subsistence agriculture more and more into a cash crop agriculture. In fact, Zahir al-'Umar's economic strength was based on exporting raw material supplies for European manufacture. Yet neither the social nor the political structure changed under his rule. He encouraged cultivation and relieved some of the tax pressure, but the status of the peasantry did not change. His power was quite traditionally based on military strength provided by imported mercenaries. His rule was repeatedly challenged – also well within the patterns of traditional politics – by various rebellions of his sons trying to succeed him.

At the same time 'Ali Bey al-Kabir in Egypt challenged the Ottoman authority by ending the annual tributes and keeping the Ottoman governor out of Egypt, but he "did nothing to change the Ottoman-Mamluk administrative and financial system that he had inherited. 'Ali Bey was not a revolutionary in the political or economic sense."[213]

The genesis of the Greek Catholic community in Damascus could initially be perceived, perhaps, as the crystallization and self-assertion of a new urban middle class. But their migration to the coast and Egypt scattered them into small communities and prevented them from becoming a social force to be reckoned with anywhere. Establishing their own communal identity in terms of religion strengthened their inner communal ties, but also separated them from the rest of a society

213 Livingstone 1968, 197

which perceived them as immigrants and a religious minority, albeit one which did not even enjoy the legal status of a *millet*. The Greek Catholics, therefore, quickly came to occupy the role of yet another minority with all the traditional weaknesses and opportunities that position entailed. Though autonomist rulers appreciated the services of the Greek Catholics, they maintained traditional patterns of relationship with them. When 'Ali Bey al-Kabir replaced the Jews with Greek Catholics in his customs administrations, the structural relations between ruler and minority did not change in any way. Ibrahim as-Sabbagh could gain as influential a position as he did at the court of Zahir al-'Umar precisely because his position was determined by his personal relationship to the ruler in the traditional way of power politics. The same held true for people like Antun Fir'aun in Egypt. By the same token, they lost their influence whenever their political masters were unable or unwilling to favor them further through their patronage.

Indeed, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century the Greek Catholics became less useful, politically as well as economically, to the rulers in Egypt and Syria. Tendencies toward local autonomy receded as the Ottoman government reestablished its presence in the area. French demand for cotton and silk from southwest Syria dropped drastically after the mid-1770's.[214] French trade with Egypt stagnated after the reign of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir. Various British plans to stimulate international trade from India via the Red Sea and Egypt came to naught. Finally, the French occupation completely disrupted trade with Europe. Each of these developments weakened the position of the Greek Catholics and reduced their usefulness in the eyes of the rulers, who eventually came to feel that they could do without them.

In sum, both the evolving Greek Catholic community and its political patrons remained locked throughout the century in a perfectly traditional relationship, in which a particular minority or some of its members could quickly gain great wealth and influence if the circumstances were favorable, but could also lose it all just as quickly under unfavorable conditions. This is what happened to the Greek Catholics toward the close of the eighteenth century.

214 Paris, 403, 407.

CHAPTER 2

SYRIANS IN EGYPT UNDER MUHAMMAD 'ALI

The events of the post-occupation period did not justify the fears of those who had left with the French. The Ottoman authorities insisted on correct relations toward the minorities, ordering them to wear distinctive traditional garb but at the same time providing police protection from any popular excesses against them. A few Syrian Christians, along with some Copts and Muslim Egyptians, were executed. The circumstances suggest that greed, rather than revenge for collaboration with the French, was the motive behind these acts.[1] Pogroms against the Greek Catholics – or any other minority for that matter – did not occur. At the same time, until after Muhammad 'Ali had firmly established his power, political instability made Egypt unattractive for immigration.

A very widely accepted opinion holds that the "religious tolerance" of Muhammad 'Ali opened the doors of Egypt to immigrating minorities. This idealized image of a "liberal" Muhammad 'Ali is even now so popular among many Syrians in Egypt that the period of his rule is often considered by them as the beginning of a Syrian presence in Egypt.[2] Fortunately, our demographic information for this period is of a more detailed and reliable nature than for the earlier period. It presents a very different picture of immigration during this time.

Apart from estimates of total populations made by foreign observers or clergymen, the most important sources for information on demographic developments are the communal registers recording all instances of baptism, marriage, and death. Only the baptism register of the Greek Catholic community in Cairo, starting in 1774,

1 Ibrahim Zaidan and "the former head of the *diwan*" Barakat were killed June 1802 (Jabarti, III, 222; Turk, 123-4). Meant is probably Jibra'il Barakat who had been appointed *douanier* of Bulaq by the French (cf. Motzki, 244). Hanna Subhani was executed in May 1803 (Jabarti, III, 246; Turk, 130). As-Sayyid Ahmad az-Zaru from Hebron was executed 4 Du 'l-Qa'da 1216. He had been one of the 60 members of the General *Diwan* constituted by the French. He was executed for his supposed collaboration with the French. This accusation was, however, only raised by some merchants when he tried to collect outstanding debts from them (Jabarti, III, 15, 150, 157, 187, 191, 210; Turk, 63, 152).

2 Charon, II, 123, for example: *"L'Église grecque et melkite d'Égypte n'a commencé à se relever qu'avec Mehmet Ali et uniquement grace aux émigrations venue de la Syrie et surtout du royaume héllène. Les catholiques de rite byzantin avaient été pour les mêmes raisons très peux nombreux en Égypte avant le XIXe siècle."* Though this statement is fairly correct with regard to the Greeks, Charon identifies erroneously the development of a church organization with the beginning of a Greek Catholic presence in Egypt. See also Barakat, 202: "The migration of Syrians began during the period of Muhammad 'Ali."

goes back to the eighteenth century. All their other registers in Cairo and Alexandria date from between 1836 and 1838. The Maronite registers for Cairo start in the year 1820; those for Alexandria in 1845. In smaller towns such as Mansura, Tanta, Zagazig, etc., registers were kept only since 1860 or later.

The case of the Greek Orthodox population from Syria is more complicated. Members of this community were usually listed in general registers of all Greek Orthodox, the majority of whom came from Greece or the Aegean Islands. Separate registers for Arabic-speaking churches existed only in Alexandria and Cairo, and only since 1869 and 1936 respectively. These registers, however, did not necessarily keep the records of *all* Syrian Greek Orthodox groups in these cities.

Other communities such as the Jacobites and Chaldaeans are not included in this study. Their members were few and their inclusion would not have changed the general picture.

More serious is the absence of any comparable information about the Muslims from Syria. What information we do have indicates that they were not numerous. But the nonexistence of any information about them as a community points out their position in Egyptian society, which had for the most part completely assimilated them within two generations[3] – a point to which we shall return later.

A great amount of varied information can be drawn from the registers. But there are also certain inherent limitations. Because we are dealing with an immigrant society, many baptisms and marriages were not reflected in the Egyptian registers at all. Nor did they properly indicate the flow of people who stayed in Egypt for only a few years. It is therefore extremely hazardous to draw conclusions about the size of total populations by extrapolating from the baptism registers. However, the number of baptisms can be considered as identical with that of live births, since even children who died within a few hours after birth were baptized. The registers can, at a minimum, provide us with a clear picture of the trends of demographic development in the communities, especially since the statistical curves of baptism as well as marriage and death developed mostly along the same pattern. The marriage statistics are, of course, much more susceptible to variations, depending on short-term crises such as wars or economic depressions, than are the statistics of birth and death.

Apart from simple information on the numerical developments of the communities, the registers provide valuable social information such as the place of origin of the deceased, professions of fathers and husbands, religious affiliations of wives, etc. Unfortunately, this information is not consistently given for all communities at all times. Whether or not such information was registered apparently depended upon the conscientiousness of the administrating priest.

Taking the baptism records as indicators for the general numerical development of the community, we can observe that after the departure of the French, the Greek

3 For the example of the Rafi'i family, see Introduction, note 2. By 1900 some 240 members of that family lived in Egypt (Shuqair 1916, 756).

Catholic community in Cairo recovered somewhat, though the number of births did not yet return to the 1780 level.[4] The recovery in Cairo depended more on internal migration from Damiette and Rosetta to Cairo than on immigration from outside. The shrinkage of the Greek Catholic communities in Damiette and Rosetta was directly related to the diminished importance of these cities as commercial centers. Alexandria, on the other hand, grew rapidly during this period. After 1840 we can observe a dramatic increase in the number of Greek Catholic births in Alexandria, while the rate stagnated in Cairo until the 1870's. The renewed immigration from Syria in the second half of the century first made itself felt in the new port of arrival.

Fortunately, in the case of the Maronites, we are in possession of some precise counts of the total community in Cairo during this time:

Table 5:[5] *Maronites in Cairo*

	population
1824	184
1843	226
1861	214
1881	512

Until 1861 we can observe some fluctuation but, on the whole, no significant increase. The only large group of Maronites to come during the period were those silk cultivators whom Muhammad 'Ali had requested from Amir Bashir II to help in his attempt to introduce the silk industry locally. After this experiment failed, some Maronites may have drifted to Cairo, others most likely settled in Zagazig.[6]

When the total numbers of the Maronite population in Cairo are related to the number of births during these years, we obtain the following birthrates: 37/1000 in 1824, 30/1000 in 1843, 27/1000 in 1861 and 27/1000 in 1881, or roughly an average of 28/1000. This is extremely low – a comparative birthrate for the Egyptian population of the time was 50/1000 – but it almost certainly does not reflect a realistic count. It is probably the result of a much higher birthrate combined with high immigration and departure rates within this migrant society.

For the purpose of calculating total population, it seems reasonable to apply this same 28/1000 rate to the Greek Catholic community in Cairo as well, since socially it seems not to have differed radically from the Maronite group. When we apply this rate we find that between 1780 and 1840 the Cairo community of Greek Catholics never exceeded 1300 people. Including Damiette and Rosetta, we might estimate for 1780 a maximum of 2000 Greek Catholics in all of Egypt. By 1840, the total

4 For statistical graphs see appendix.

5 *Kitab al-yubil*, 174–180, and for 1881 Khuri, 156.

6 How many there were and how many were actually Maronites is hard to determine. Jabarti, IV, 281, speaks of "Druze, Mutawalis, Nusairis and others".

number – now including Alexandria as the second center of Greek Catholic population – would be rather less than 2000, certainly no more. These figures are, of course, only estimates. But even if we combine the figures for Maronites and Greek Catholics, the total would still fall far short of Jomard's estimate of 5000 Greek Catholics and Maronites in Cairo alone in 1800.[7]

Imperfect as this statistical information is, it still permits several valid observations:

1. Until the 1840's, the size of the Syrian population in Egypt was fairly stable.
2. While Cairo's Syrian population remained stagnant, Damiette and Rosetta lost their Syrian communities altogether, a loss which benefited Cairo and especially Alexandria.
3. In all cases the Maronites were much less numerous than the Greek Catholics.
4. For the whole period we have no indication of a Syrian Greek Orthodox population. If it existed, its numbers were negligible.[8]

Perhaps the most important conclusion we can draw from these observations is that, contrary to common belief, very little immigration from Syria to Egypt occurred during the rule of Muhammad 'Ali.

As we have remarked before, immigration is the result of a complex interplay of social, economic and ideological forces. Two decisive conditions must be fulfilled before immigration can take place: pressures in the land of origin must create a motivation for emigration, and opportunities to improve the original conditions of life must be perceived in the land of destination.

During the eighteenth century the pressure of the Greek Orthodox church in Syria had been one of the reasons for Greek Catholic migration. This same pressure at the beginning of the nineteenth century, coming to a climax in violent intercommunal clashes in Aleppo in 1818, led to a mass migration of Greek Catholics from there to Mt. Lebanon and even Istanbul.[9] The strength and the ability of the Greek Orthodox church to take such an aggressive position depended, in the final analysis, upon the backing it received from the Ottoman authorities. With the beginning of the Greek uprising, this support was no longer forthcoming and the Greek Catholics in Syria could breathe more easily. The Egyptian occupation of Syria between 1832

7 Jomard, 694. Volney's estimate (I, 209) of 2300 "Syrians" for Cairo seems much closer to the truth. Mengin, II, 275, gives 3000 Syrians for Cairo, 500 for Damiette, and 200 for Alexandria and Rosetta. Thirteen years later Clot, II, 275, gives the same numbers for Cairo and Damiette but 300 for Alexandria and 200 for Rosetta. He most likely used Mengin's information as a basis. That he was not very conscientious with his figures is shown when, later in the same book, he simply repeats the figures of Jomard of 5000 Syrians; *ibid.* 243.

8 Jomard, loc, cit. indicates that in 1800 all Greek Orthodox were Greeks. Two generations later, Kremer, II, 98–99, still can claim that there were only a few Maronites, a "considerable number" of Greek Catholics, especially in Cairo and Alexandria, while all Greek Orthodox came from Turkish-speaking provinces of the Ottoman Empire, i.e., were Greek-speaking themselves.

9 Qar'ali 1933, 29; Dimashqi, 291–294.

and 1840 meant for the local Christians a considerable step toward emancipation from *dhimmi* status. The Greek Catholics especially benefited from the Egyptian civil administration headed by their co-religionist Hanna al-Bahri. They were free to develop their own communal organization and many grew rich doing business with the Egyptian army. Their sentiments were well reflected in the sermon delivered by the Patriarch Maximos Mazlum at the opening of the first Greek Catholic church in Damascus under Egyptian occupation. As the theme for the sermon he chose the deliverance of the Children of Israel from servitude.[10] The irony, though, that this time the faithful were delivered not *from* but *by* the Egyptians seems to have escaped him.

In the 1820's and 1830's the motivation to emigrate from Syria declined considerably among the Greek Catholics. But it is remarkable that even in 1818, when they actually felt forced to leave Aleppo, they did not – with few exceptions – choose Egypt as their destination. This brings us to the second condition for emigration: opportunities perceived to exist in the land of destination. It appears that Egypt under Muhammad 'Ali was not attractive to Syrians emigrants. This observation seems especially surprising in light of the large-scale Greek immigration to Egypt during the same time, as well as the arrival of Armenian and other immigrants. For an explanation of this phenomenon we need to take a closer look at the fortunes of those Syrians already in Egypt.

A general impression of stagnation and perhaps even deterioration of the Syrian community during this period can be gleaned from contemporary reports. In 1828, F. Mengin writes that the Syrians are all Greek Catholic, *"les uns se livrent au commerce, d'autres sont marchands, drapiers, merciers, quincailliers, quelques-uns exercent l'état de courtier,"* but since the rise to power of Muhammad 'Ali *"les changements survenues en Égypte leur ont été nuisibles; ils ont perdu leurs biens et les avantages que leur offrait un commerce privilégié."*[11] The established families like the Kahils, the Zananiris, the Boktis, the Dibbanas, the Zaghibs, etc., were still there. Their preserved wealth and status were expressed in the acquisition of consular positions representing a variety of countries, which at the same time ensured foreign protection. Yet more often than not these families seem to have been on the decline. In 1815 the physician of Lady Hester Stanhope visited Damiette and stayed at the residence of Mikha'il Surur, the "English agent, a young gentleman of considerable abilities and property ... he had several fine horses, upon which he rode out daily. Mounted himself on a superbly caparisoned stallion, his grooms preceded him on foot, bearing perpendicularly each his *zan* or white staff in the right hand, with which, as he went along, they beat the walls"[12]. Twenty years later Surur "had inherited large date plantations" from his family but was since years

10 *Mukhtasar*, 90.
11 Mengin 1823, II, 272, 275.
12 Meryon, III, 223.

deeply indebted because all revenue went to the government.[13] The Baroness von Minutoli has provided us with a detailed description of the prosperous household of Basil Fakhr in Damiette in 1826,[14] yet eight years later when his son Yusuf Fakhr was to be considered for an appointment as Russian consular agent in Damiette, the Russian Consul expressed hesitation because Yusuf had *"des moyens les plus médiocres, et ne ressemblant en rien à son père, qui jouissait d'une considération générale"*.[15] It is noteworthy that among the 72 commercial establishments in Alexandria in 1837, only 7 belonged to Syrians. None of them was owned by any of the old established families, and we find no evidence of any dramatic success in the world of commerce among the newly arrived Syrian families.

At first glance it seems surprising that a minority group such as the Greek Catholics, who for generations had been closely involved in the economic activities of Egypt, did not flourish in the rapidly expanding and booming economic environment of Muhammad 'Ali's rule. We have to look at the structural changes in the Egyptian economy as well as the changes in the position of various groups in the political and economic system to find the reasons for the Greek Catholic failure to participate fully in the economic developments of this time.

Muhammad 'Ali's desire to maximize government revenues led to the centralization of financial administration and the expansion of government control into most areas of economic life. Commerce was actually controlled in two ways: (a) Government monopolies were established, whereby the government collected the product from the peasant, fixed the prices and determined which merchant it would deal with; (b) *appaltos* or tax-farms were auctioned off, giving a merchant exclusive trade rights in a particular commodity for one or more years. The government would supply him with the commodity at a fixed price.[16] Thus the merchant's profit margin was often very small while the commercial risk of selling the merchandise remained his alone. There was little room for the free-wheeling competition of the market, where fortunes could be made by undercutting the prices of the competitors, as the Greek Catholics had done with French textiles in the eighteenth century. Wealth could be accumulated only by obtaining favorable *appalto* conditions. This required access to the court and personal connections with high officials.[17]

The second basic change in the economic structure was the conversion of subsistence agriculture to a cash-crop export basis, integrating the Egyptian economy

13 St. John, II, 436.
14 Minutoli, 165–173.
15 Cattaui, IIa, 21.
16 *Ibid.*, 68.
17 Structurally *apalto* and *iltizam* did not differ. But since the rule of Muhammad 'Ali the government kept much closer control over the tax farms, reduced the possible profits of the tax farmer and tended to replace the whole system with government employees. For a detailed discussion see EI², *Iltizam*.

into the European market. Here, too, the government administration played a controlling role as the link between the primary producer and the European export merchants in Alexandria.

It would be incorrect to portray the monopoly system of Muhammad 'Ali and his administrative control as the only or even the major reason for the failure of the Syrians to participate in Egypt's economic development during the period. The system was never completely enforced and though the merchants, as a class, lost control over trade, many individual merchants made huge fortunes with *appalto* contracts. It was certainly not true that "all commerce among native traders came to an end" as has been claimed,[18] nor were the "native merchants forced out of business completely,[19] but rather *"les 'marchands', dans le cadre du commerce intérieur, sont en grande majorité indigènes. L'État n'a pas étendu son monopole au commerce de détail trop fragmenté et s'est contenté de fixer les prix de vente afin de limiter les hausses. Les marchands conservent des vestiges appréciable de leur ancienne autonomie."*[20] There were Muslim merchants of considerable wealth such as the father of Mustafa al-Hajin[21] or al-Hajj 'Isa al-Maghribi, Muhammad Amin Agha and 'Abd al-Maqsud Agha, who were among the first to invest some of their capital in landholdings.[22]

Even more pertinent to our discussion is the case of the Greeks. Before and after the Greek war of independence a steady stream of Greek immigrants arrived in Egypt. Most settled there; many became merchants and traders. As mentioned earlier, of the 72 major commercial establishments in Alexandria in 1837, 14 were in Greek hands. In 1815, 6 out of 8 merchants in Suez were Greeks.[23] In 1821, Mengin lists 20 European commercial establishments in Cairo, and 8 of them were Greek.

The monopoly system, then, might have hampered the development of a merchant class but it certainly did not destroy all merchants. As the case of the Greeks shows, some could even flourish in this system. The reasons for the rise of the Greek and the comparative decline of the Syrian merchants, therefore, are not to be found in the monopoly system.

Shifts in the direction of foreign trade and in the merchandise it carried provide us with better reasons for the differing fortunes of various merchant groups. In the eighteenth century, the major trade of Egypt consisted of international transit trade. Only a few local products such as rice and skins played a role in the foreign trade. Trade with Europe was important, but the volume of trade with the Ottoman

18 Abdel Rahim Mustafa, 291.
19 Rivlin, 176.
20 Tomiche, 256.
21 Mubarak, III, 54–55.
22 Barakat, 215–216.
23 Politis, I, 178.

Empire was much larger.[24] Under the rule of Muhammad 'Ali, international transit trade and trade with the Ottoman Empire – especially with the Syrian provinces – diminished. Meanwhile the export of Egyptian agricultural products to Europe and industrial imports from there became the most important commercial activity. Demographic evidence for this shift in trade patterns can be found in the growth of Alexandria, the population of which grew from 12,500 in 1821 to 164,000 in 1846 and 231,000 in 1881. In contrast Damiette, the largest Egyptian port in the eighteenth century, grew only from 13,600 inhabitants in 1821 to 37,000 in 1846 and actually lost population in the second half of the century.[25] Damiette, the stronghold of the Syrian merchants, had lost its commercial importance. In Alexandria the export trade to Europe was conducted almost exclusively with the mushrooming European commercial establishments which had the financial strength to provide Muhammad 'Ali with the frequently demanded advance payments guaranteed by future cash crops. These establishments also were better equipped to market Egypt's crops in Europe and to provide Muhammad 'Ali with the desired industrial imports. The Greeks' successful participation in the foreign trade was probably based on the fact that much of the shipping business was in their hands.[26] After their war of independence the Greeks enjoyed the same capitulary privileges as all the other Europeans.

In the eighteenth century, Cairo had been the main seat of all commercial activities while the merchants in Alexandria usually worked only as agents for those in Cairo. This situation was reversed during the period of Muhammad 'Ali and Cairo's commercial importance became secondary to that of Alexandria.

The distribution of major commercial establishments in Alexandria and Cairo elucidates this development: in 1821, Alexandria counted 21 European establishments, 5 of them Greek.[27] In the same year Cairo had 20 European establishments, 8 of them Greek.[28] In 1839 Bowring lists 72 major trading houses in Alexandria. Their names indicate that 14 were in Greek and only 7 were in Syrian hands. The rest, with one Muslim exception, were European.[29] For Cairo, Bowring enumerates rather than names foreign merchants: 24 Turkish, 15 European, 10 Greek Catholic and 10 Greek Orthodox establishments.[30] A year earlier Mengin listed for Cairo 18 European (including two Greek), 63 Muslim (Maghribi, Turkish, Egyptian), and 10

24 For 1776 Egyptian trade with all of Europe was estimated at 12.9 million livres, while that with the Ottoman lands stood at 67.5 million livres (Masson, XVIII[e], 598).

25 Baer, 134–135.

26 Before the Greek war of independence many of the ships arriving in Alexandria had crews and captains from the Greek islands. In 1836 Bowring, 74–76, reported that 154 of a total of 580 incoming ships flew the Greek flag.

27 Mengin 1839, 225.

28 Mengin 1823, II, 417–418.

29 Bowring, 80; Politis, I, 240–241.

30 Bowring, 82.

Greek Catholic commercial establishments. Of the latter he says, "*aucun n'inspire de la confiance; les uns sont presque ruines, les autres, debiteurs du gouvernement, sont en faillite.*"[31] For Damiette, in the same year, Mengin indicated a total of 7 trading houses, 2 Muslim and 5 Greek Catholic. Though these lists are not comprehensive and at points disagree with each other, the trend of development is nevertheless clear: Alexandria became the center of commercial activities, while the major commercial establishments of Cairo decreased in number and often became only the agents for merchants in Alexandria.[32] Syrian merchants were, however, much more numerous in Cairo than in Alexandria, and in the now insignificant port of Damiette they even constituted in absolute majority.[33]

The Syrians were strongly represented in the places where they had been traditionally established and had developed vested interests. Perhaps the burden of tradition among the established Syrian merchants made them less flexible than the more recently immigrated Greeks. Certainly their financial weakness – resulting from the loss of control over the customs and the general losses suffered during the French occupation, as well as their limited ability to obtain foreign protection – prevented them from following the shifting trade patterns and from participating fully in the new international trade.

A contributing factor to the Syrians' lack of commercial success is much more difficult to pinpoint though it is no less important. To wit, the traditional issue of access to and personal relation with the ruler also played an important role in the Egypt of Muhammad 'Ali. It has been observed repeatedly that because of the gov-

31 Mengin 1839, 227.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Boislecomte provides a statistic of all foreigners in Alexandria for the year 1833:

Anglais, Maltais, Ioniens	3,000
Français	300
Grecs	400
Levantins	20
Algériens, Romains, Suisses	50
Refugiés Espagnols, Italiens et Allemands	40
Toscans en grande partie Juifs de Livourne	500
Autrichiens presque tous Italiens	296
Sardes	70
Napolitains	150
Espagnols des îles Baléares	60
Total	4,886

(G. Douin 1927, 109). The bulk of people in the first category was constituted by Maltese and Ionians, so that we can assume that the number of ethnic Greeks was far more than a thousand. Remarkable is the extremely low number of "Levantins", i.e. Syrians. Though they were few it is difficult to believe that they were only twenty.

Boislecomte had gathered this information from the various consuls and the numbers indicated here imply, most likely, persons who had actually foreign citizenship or enjoyed foreign protection. In this case the statistic would at least indicate how very few Syrians enjoyed actually foreign protection and privileges.

ernment's monopoly system, access to the court and the ruler was decisive in obtaining favorable commercial contracts.

Apart from the Europeans, whose relations to Muhammad 'Ali were very complex, it seems that two minority groups enjoyed free access to and the trust of the Pasha:

The Armenians, who had played no particular role under the old regime, suddenly came into the limelight through Boghos Pasha Yusuf, who was probably the person closest to Muhammad 'Ali and enjoyed his absolute trust. For a long time he was in charge of Egypt's foreign relations and commerce. Under his patronage other Armenians became especially powerful in the administration and played a role in the introduction of new techniques of production and manufacturing. Together with the Greeks, they were eventually among the first to acquire *'uhda* land.[34]

The second favored group was the Greeks. Apparently Muhammad 'Ali had a special liking for them and maintained close personal relationships with several of them.[35] The Tossizza brothers knew Muhammad 'Ali already when he was still a merchant in Kavalla. Under his patronage they became major merchants in Alexandria, and one of them was appointed the first Greek consul in Egypt. D'Anastasy, merchant and Swedish consul in Alexandria, also knew Muhammad 'Ali from the period before his rise to power. Another Greek, Athanase Casulli, was entrusted with the management of the mint. They, like most other Greeks in Egypt, were recent immigrants, settling mainly in Alexandria, the new center of commerce. Muhammad 'Ali's benevolence toward them was not even weakened by the Greek war of independence. After the war, additional immigrants fleeing from other territories of the Ottoman Empire further strengthened the Greek community in Egypt.[36]

The question of access and proximity to the ruler also had a linguistic dimension. In the eighteenth century, during the resurgence of the Mamluk element in Egypt, Arabic was by and large the language of administration and government. Only orders received from Istanbul were written in Turkish.[37] In the nineteenth century and especially during the period of Muhammad 'Ali – most records, including those relating to the internal administrative and political affairs of Egypt, were kept in Turkish. The use of Turkish in Egypt experienced a resurgence because of Muhammad 'Ali's ignorance of Arabic and the expansion of government administration.[38]

The Greek Catholics had never been an empire-wide minority but one localized in the Arabic-speaking provinces of Syria. When they began to enter government services it was usually as secretaries in the Arabic department. Some of their major patrons, such as Zahir al-'Umar, did not know Turkish themselves. In Egypt, igno-

34 Rivlin, 66.
35 Cf., for instance, Kremer, II, 97–98.
36 For information on the Greeks during this period see Politis, I, chapter 2.
37 Shaw, 32–33.
38 Shayyal, 222.

rance of Turkish was not an obstacle for access to the government. For commercial dealings, mastery of French and Italian was far more essential for the Greek Catholics. By 1752 Mikha'il Fakhr was already able to write a somewhat clumsy but by all means comprehensible French.[39]

But with the rise of Muhammad 'Ali to power, the Greek Catholics' ignorance of Turkish must have become a definite handicap in their effort to establish relations with the court and the ruler. In contrast, we can assume almost certainly that those Greeks and Armenians who had known Muhammad 'Ali before his arrival in Egypt all had one language in common with him: Ottoman Turkish.

Thus the relations of the Syrians to the court and the ruler were limited and of a somewhat different nature. The only member of an established Syrian family to have had personal access to Muhammad 'Ali was Yusuf Bokti. He seems to have been of some influence in policy-making, especially in the early period of Muhammad 'Ali's rule. He is credited – together with Drovetti – with the suggestion of establishing a local industry[40] and was supposedly taking an active role in building up the textile industry.[41] Likewise, he was instrumental in sending the first student mission to Europe.[42] (He himself had studied in France and Rome at the end of the eighteenth century.) Yusuf became the consul of Sweden while a brother, Butrus Bokti, was consular agent of Russia. Yet there is little evidence that either of them continued to play a role of consequence in the politics or economics of Egypt.

More remarkable is the career of the Bahri family. Originating in Homs, the family had come in the middle of the eighteenth century to Damascus and Acre. Either there or back in Homs the Bahris converted to Catholicism. Mikha'il al-Bahri (d. 1799), the poet, was educated at the court of Zahir al-'Umar and employed by Ibrahim as-Sabbagh. Later he worked as a secretary for Ahmad al-Jazzar. After experiencing the hazards of an administrative career under al-Jazzar – he was jailed and half blinded – he retired in 1789 to Beirut where he dedicated himself to poetry. His sons 'Abbud (d. 1819), Jirmanus (d. 1846), and Hanna (d. 1843) served as secretaries in Acre and Damascus. Jirmanus had to leave Acre for Damascus under the pressure of Haim Farhi. When the last patron of the Bahri brothers in Damascus, Yusuf Pasha, was removed from the governorship, they joined him on his flight to Egypt in 1810. Muhammad 'Ali immediately employed the Bahri brothers as secretaries in various branches of the financial administration. 'Abbud became head of logistics for the Wahhabi campaign. After his death, his brother Hanna, who had married a girl from the Kahil family, thereby establishing social ties with the old Syrian families in Cairo, rose to a key position in the financial administration. By 1820 he had become a sort of special adviser on Syrian affairs. The link between Amir Bashir II and Muhammad 'Ali was established via Hanna al-Bahri and his cou-

39 AN B[1] 330; 196.
40 Mengin 1839, 21; Minutoli, 33–34; Bowring, 31.
41 Bowring, ibid.
42 Shayyal, 96.

sin, Butrus Karama, who was at the very time chief secretary of Amir Bashir II. Later, Hanna became the general manager of finances and organization for the Syrian expedition and from 1832 to 1840 controlled all aspects of the civilian administration of Syria. This made him for all practical purposes, though not in name, the governor of Damascus. His brother Jirmanus became his aide as the head of administration in Aleppo.

There exists some confusion over the role of another member of the Bahri family, Habib, the son of Jirmanus. The Greek Catholic historian Qustantin Basha attributed the role of private secretary of Muhammad 'Ali and from 1833 to 1840 the role of *kakhya* and minister of interior to Habib. Other historians of the community later repeated this claim on the authority of Q. Basha.[43] There is no doubt that a certain Habib Effendi filled these positions at the indicated time,[44] but he was a Muslim with no relation to the Bahri family.[45] It was probably true that Habib al-Bahri had some clerical position in Muhammad 'Ali's administration, but he never reached the rank his father and uncles had obtained.[46]

Though the Bahri brothers enjoyed spectacular careers, their positions could not, of course, compare to that of Boghos Pasha or compete with the influence and access various Greeks enjoyed. During the height of their career Hanna and Jirmanus were far removed from the court at Cairo. Thus their ability to promote the business interests of their coreligionists in Egypt was limited.

The Bahri family was unique in that ist members, who belonged to a very small number of new Syrian immigrants during this time, were the only Syrians to enjoy high administrative positions under the patronage of Muhammad 'Ali. In contrast to almost all other Syrians in Egypt, their family had never been engaged in commercial activities. They were also some of the few Syrians who had mastered Turkish.[47] Their educational background and professional experience made them administrators par excellence. Because of their knowledge and contacts they were especially qualified to deal with Syrian affairs.

43 Basha 1907, 167; Basha 1925, 74–77; Charon, II, 398–399.

44 Mengin 1839, 112–113; Bowring, 48, Douin 1925, 165.

45 Cattaui, I, 289: In August 1828 Habib Effendi is described as "...homme d'un mérite supérieur, pour un musulman, très sage, modéré et prudent" (sic.). This Habib had a son whom he sent in 1828 to study in Paris. Habib al-Bahri's first son was born in 1833. A biography of a grandson of Habib al-Bahri, written before Q. Basha made his claim, never mentioned Habib though it discussed the merits of 'Abbud and Hanna (Zakhura 1916, 85). Mengin 1839, xxxviii, makes it a point that Hanna al-Bahri is Syrian but never mentions anything similar with regard to Habib Effendi, the functionary. In fact none of the documents we saw adds "al-Bahri" to the name of Habib Effendi, while they consistently refer to Hanna al-Bahri.

46 For information on the Bahri family see: *al-Mashriq*, III (1900), 9–22; S. Bahri, "Hanna el Bahri", *Le Lien*, XXXVII, 5–68; Mishaqa 1955, 42; Jabarti, IV, 303; ad-Dimashqi, 114–115, 179–183.

47 Mishaqa 1955, 42.

It was perhaps this difference in background and professional orientation more than anything else which made the Bahris unwilling or unable to share and promote the commercial interest of their coreligionists in Cairo. A divergence of interests between the commercial class and the administrators and intellectuals can be sensed here for the first time. By the end of the nineteenth century, as we shall see, a considerable divergence of cultural identification and political orientation among the Syrians in Egypt would emerge.

In Muhammad 'Ali's all-encompassing effort to develop Egypt's economic and military basis there was only one particular function where the skills of a group of Syrians were genuinely needed. The intended modernization required the training of a new cadre of administrators, technicians, and officers. For this purpose, student missions were sent to Europe. Simultaneously, a variety of professional schools were set up in Egypt. Teachers and textbooks were brought from Europe for the instruction of the students. From the beginning, language was a formidable problem as the European teachers spoke neither Turkish nor Arabic. Their lectures as well as the text-books had to be translated. Translation became a central function in the educational system. It was for this function that a very specific group of Syrians could provide the needed skills and play – at least for a limited time – a decisive role.

The list of books published in Arabic during the rule of Muhammad 'Ali in the Bulaq press provides us with the names of translators.[48] The following Syrians were among them: Antun Rufa'il Zakhur, Augustin Sakakini, Yusuf Fir'aun, Yuhanna 'Anhuri, Jurj Fidal, and a certain Ya'qub about whom nothing but his first name is known. Jurj Fidal was a Maronite; all the others were Greek Catholics. Yuhanna 'Anhuri had apparently spent some time in Italy, since the books he translated into Arabic had first to be translated for him from French into Italian! The first three Syrians mentioned – and perhaps also Fidal and Ya'qub – belonged to a group of educated Syrians to whom one could add, for instance, Mikha'il as-Sabbagh, grandson of Ibrahim and historian of Zahir al'Umar's reign, as well as two other members of the Fir'aun family, Yuhanna and Ilyas. Some of them had already worked for the French in Egypt as translators, secretaries, etc. All of them left Egypt with or shortly after the French withdrawal. In France most of them earned their living with their knowledge of Arabic and the Middle East. Yuhanna Fir'aun and Antun Rufa'il Zakhur were Arabic teachers; Mikha'il as-Sabbagh (d. 1816) collaborated with the Orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy. Other worked as translators for the French in Tunis and Algeria. In 1816 Antun Rufa'il Zakhur was the first to return to Egypt, probably on his own initiative. Until his death in 1831 he remained the only Syrian translator for the Bulaq press.

The need for translations from French into Arabic became urgent only when the schools for medicine and veterinary science were opened in 1827 and 1828 respec-

48 Shayyal, appendix; with very few exceptions they were all books translated from the French.

tively. In contrast to the strictly military schools, these institutions were mainly attended by Egyptians and not by Turkish-speaking Ottomans. The Syrian translators were hired now and brought back from France. Initially they worked as interpretors for the French instructors in the classrooms, but in the earlier thirties they were ordered to translate a number of text books.

These Syrian translators have been accused of a faulty knowledge of Arabic since usually a *shaikh* from al-Azhar was attached to them as a *musahhih* to correct their translations.[49] In fact, not only the Syrians, but also many of the later Egyptian translators – even some with an educational background from al-Azhar – worked together with such "correctors". This collaboration does not reflect a weak knowledge of language but rather the enormous difficulties of finding and creating new terms and concepts in Arabic which would adequately reproduce modes of thought and meaning developed outside the Arab-Muslim culture. The creative activity of translation became a major force in the development of modern Arab literature and language.

Table 6:[50] *Works translated into Arabic by Syrians and Egyptians*

	total number of translations	Syrian translators	Egyptian translators	unknown
1822–37	28	16	9	3
1837–47	68	14	53	1

Though Syrians were to have a large share in the adaptation of European thought and the introduction of new literary forms to Egypt in the second half of the nineteenth century, their participation in the early stage of this process was of short duration. By the mid-thirties, more and more graduates of the student missions to France has returned and one of their first tasks was usually to translate books in their fields of specialization. Finally, the first graduates of the language school in Cairo joined the ranks of Egyptian translators.

While the number of books translated into Arabic and published in the Bulaq press increased dramatically during the last decade of Muhammad 'Ali's rule, the role of the Syrian translators diminished. The last eleven translations done by a Syrian were all the work of Yusuf Fir'aun. After 1847 no more translations were prepared by Syrians. We don't know the circumstances of the dismissal or resignation of the Syrian translators, but it seems clear that their employment was never meant to be more than a temporary solution. Like many of the European instructors, they were replaced as soon as returnees from the student missions could fill their positions. In this context, it is also significant that none of the Syrian trans-

49 Shayyal, 207.
50 Table compiled from Shayyal, appendix I.

lators were sent abroad to study medicine themselves, while a number of the correctors of medical texts were eventually sent abroad for this purpose.[51] As far as can be established, only one Syrian was ever sent by the government of Muhammad 'Ali to Study in Europe. Niqula Masabiki, a Maronite from Aleppo, was sent to Italy in 1815 to study the art of printing. Upon his return in 1819, he established the Bulaq Press and directed it until 1830. He, too, was asked immediately to train some *shaiks* from al-Azhar in this profession.[52]

Apart from the European instructors, the role of non-Muslims in this huge educational effort remained minimal. The Armenians constituted an exception. Several were sent as students to Europe and they played a role in the administration of education which was the result of their generally high positions in government and administration.[53] Most striking is the complete absence of the Copts as either students, teachers, or translators in new institutions. Muhammad 'Ali, in fact, initiated training programs aimed at breaking the Coptic monopoly over land-surveying and revenue-collection.[54]

The men sent to study in Europe, along with the students in the new institutions in Egypt, were meant to form the new technical, administrative and educational elite of the country. In Muhammad 'Ali's view, both Egyptian and Ottoman Muslims remained the *staatstragende* element. Christians – local or foreign – could, at best, have only a temporary in role in helping to create this elite.

In contrast to the Copts, the Syrians in Egypt during this period already displayed considerable familiarity with Europe. Dealings with French merchants, business trips to Marseille and Livorno, association with the French occupation forces – all gave the Syrians opportunity to acquire a knowledge of French and Italian. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the intellectual life of the Syrian colony in Damiette must have been quite active. Basil Fahkr, French and later Russian consular agent there, knew Arabic, Italian, French, Greek, Turkish, and probably English. In his lavishly furnished house he had a library of Arabic as well as European books and manuscripts. Apparently he translated some books from Arabic into Italian. By 1814, he had translated into Arabic two books by Lalande on astronomy as well as an English and an Italian work on natural sciences.[55] In 1818 he aroused a lively discussion in Damiette when he translated Volney's *Les Ruines ou Méditations sur les révolutions des empires* with its attacks on religion. Others composed their

51 E.g. Ahmad Hasan ar-Rashidi; Husain Ghanim ar-Rashidi (Shayyal, 104–109).

52 Shayyal, 71, 198; Khuri, 97, claims that two of his brothers were also sent to Europe, but they do not appear in the lists of students sent abroad.

53 Heyworth-Dunne, 191. The general council for education established in 1836 had among its eleven members three Armenians but not one Copt or Syrian.

54 Heyworth-Dunne, 108, 309.

55 Joseph-Jérôme de Lalande (1732–1807); also a book on physics by Rigo al-Balastanelli (?) as well as a book on nature by "Benjamin, the Englishman" are mentioned (Mishaqa 1955, 62).

own books. Butrus 'Anhuri, for instance, wrote a book on the solar eclipse.[56] It is likely that other translations and books were published but there is no record of them. Since none of the mentioned works were printed, their intellectual impact was probably restricted to the Syrian community itself.

Lest the picture drawn here be distorted, it should be pointed out that the Syrians – and in particular the Greek Catholics – had a primarily Arabic education. Their proper knowledge of Arabic language and its scripts was what qualified them for the position of secretary, which so many of them held at various courts. Of 'Abbud al-Bahri, Jabarti has said: "His professional performance was praiseworthy. ... He quoted analogies and Koranic verses and inserted in his compositions and correspondence Koranic verses and rhymed prose."[57] Of another distinguished Syrian, Yusuf Bokti, we know that he had a choice collection of Arabic manuscripts in his library.[58]

We know very little about how such education was acquired. The teaching the priests provided for the elementary level must have been fairly disastrous.[59] Much of the education was probably passed on from father to son, be it in business or in administration. But we also have some evidence that Greek Catholics studied with Muslim *shaikhs*. Mikha'il as-Sabbagh attended the lectures of shaikh Yusuf al-Karashi and shaikh Sulaiman as-Saba' in al-Azhar.[60] The merchant Butrus 'Anhuri studied astronomy under the shaikh Muhammad Sabbagh al-Miqati in Damiette.[61] Mikha'il al-Bahri and the sons of Ibrahim as-Sabbagh studied with shaikh Ahmad ash-Shuwaiki, the Mufti of Acre.[62] As secretaries or sons of secretaries they were eyewitnesses to many of the local political events. The many commercial connections of their community with Europe sensitized them to the world beyond their immediate local realm. Their Arabic education made them articulate observers and commentators. It is therefore not surprising to find a whole new school of Arab historiography developing among the Greek Catholics at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Niqula Turk, Mikha'il and 'Abbud as-Sabbagh, Ibrahim al-'Aura, and Mikha'il Mishaqa reflect this new awareness of the importance of local developments as part of a much larger historical context in their works. They did this by giving expression to a new appreciation of the individual human being by inserting a great deal of autobiographical and familial material into the general flow of their historical narration. The education and the creative expression of the Greek Catholics was first and foremost in Arabic.

56 Mishaqa 1955, 62, 65; Minutoli, 165–173; 'Aura, 438. It seems that even the clergy became involved in these scientific discussions. Antun Marun gave a long description in his diary of the mechanics of the solar eclipse, when one occurred in 1814 (*Kitab al-yubil*, 133).

57 Jabarti, IV, 303.

58 Minutoli, 30–31.

59 Cf. Salame, 71, where he describes his own experience around 1800.

60 Shaikhu, 24–34.

61 Mishaqa 1955, 63.

62 Basha 1925, 73.

The Syrians in the Egypt of Muhammad 'Ali were caught in a state of stagnation and limbo. Though compared to the preceding period they were materially worse off, they were still able to hold on to a standard of living far above that of the large majority of the Egyptians. No immigration worth mentioning increased their numbers before the 1840's. Although they possessed a variety of skills and considerable education, they had lost their influential positions and did not participate actively in the creation of the economic and intellectual, administrative and political foundations of the future Egyptian nation-state.

A genuine development in the situation of the Syrian immigrants can be observed only with regard to their communal organization and religious emancipation. Throughout the eighteenth century the attitude of the authorities toward the non-Muslims had oscillated according to internal political circumstances. For long periods some *dhimmi* groups prospered and felt secure enough to display their prosperity publicly. At other times rigorous attempts were made by the government to enforce all the restrictions that were part of the *dhimmi* status, such as wearing certain clothes, living in modest houses, not using horses, etc. The repeated attempts to enforce these laws show that they were not strictly observed.[63]

Under the rule of Muhammad 'Ali, with the heavy influx of Greek, Armenian, and European Christians, the observance of the restrictive rules for *dhimmis* lapsed completely. A last attempt to restore the traditional order was made by the energetic *muhtasib* Mustafa Kashif Kurd, who had been appointed by Muhammad 'Ali in 1816 to bring the markets under control and to eliminate profiteering. He went further than that and ordered all the Armenian, Greek, and Syrian Christians to evacuate the opulent houses in Old Cairo which they had built there recently, to dismiss all Muslim servants, and to wear again their traditionally prescribed garb. This time the Christians complained to the Pasha "who made allowances for them since they had become the confidents of the government, the companions of His Highness and his intimate friends".[64]

Jabarti bitterly lamented the passing of the old order and criticized the haughty

63 Such orders were issued at various times: (a) July 3, 1787 by Hasan Pasha, the Ottoman Admiral, after taking Cairo from Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey (Jabarti, II, 115). (b) Dec. 14, 1787 by 'Abdi Pasha who revoked his order to destroy Christian houses only after he was paid by the Christians 35,000 riyal, more than half of which was paid by the Syrians (Jabarti, II, 155). (c) Feb. 13, 1799 by the French, who explicitly asked the Christians from Syria to return to their traditional attire (al-Jabarti, III, 45). (d) July 26, 1801 by the Ottoman commander upon taking Cairo from the French (al-Jabarti, III, 190). (e) Aug. 2, 1803 the issue of attire was brought up again with the arrival of French consul in Cairo. Many Christians came to see him. Especially Christians from Syria who considered themselves under direct protection of the French now and again wore colorful, rich clothes. But all those who could not produce an official *berat* were ordered by the authorities to wear traditional attire again (al-Jabarti, III, 260; Turk, 146).

64 Jabarti, IV, 280.

behavior of the Christians: "...especially the enemies of religion, they constitute now the nobility, they take over positions, they dress like great lords ... they live in high and splendid houses which they buy for the highest prices ... obtaining unprecedented rank they humiliate the Muslims ... dignitaries as well as commoners stand humiliated before the infidel".[65] While Jabarti denounced this trend, Western observers praised the "religious tolerance" of Muhammad 'Ali. But it seems to us that his attitude was not determined by the principle of religious tolerance per se but rather by the raison d'état. Like the Prussian king, Frederick the Great, he was indifferent to religious distinctions as long as the supreme interest of the secular government was recognized and served by all. If such royal indifference toward all religious denominations attracted immigrants persecuted elsewhere and useful to the state – such as the Huguenots who came to Berlin – so much the better! On these conditions the ruler could indeed proclaim that in his state: "... *soll jeder nach seiner façon seelig werden*".[66]

This indifference toward religion, as long as it was clearly subordinated to the authority of the state, was a boon to all non-Muslim communities. All restrictive regulations were disregarded and the de facto emancipation of the non-Muslims in Egypt occurred much earlier than the de jure recognition of the equality of all subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

The Maronites had never been recognized as a legally autonomous *millet* in the Ottoman Empire. Like the Nestorians, Jacobites, and Copts, they had been vaguely and only theoretically subordinated to the authority of the Armenian *millet* after the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands. In practice, the Maronites remained autonomous and their status was never challenged. For that reason the Maronite clergy from Mt. Lebanon could – earlier than the Greek Catholic clergy – be active in Egypt without being harassed. But since the number of Maronites was small, the clergy usually had to cooperate with the Greek Catholic community and the Franciscan order. Only during the rule of Muhammad 'Ali did the Maronite church community in Egypt acquire a more distinct organizational shape. In 1820, with Antun Marun, the Maronite community in Egypt received its first patriarchal vicar with unequivocal authority over the members of the order, the priests, and all the community members.[67]

The first step toward the formalization of the community organization was the establishment, in 1820, of church records in Cairo. A dispute with the Franciscan order led to the exclusion of the Maronites from the use of the order's cemetery. In 1826 Antun Marun bought a piece of land for the purpose of providing a Maronite churchyard. After considerable difficulties, the first Maronite church in Old Cairo was opened in 1837. It was financed by the order and the Patriarch, as the

65 Jabarti, IV, 15.
66 See for instance Haffner, S.: *Preussen ohne Legende*, Hamburg 1977, 74.
67 Khuri, 101.

Maronite community in Cairo was apparently too poor to pay for it.[68] But while the land in Old Cairo had been cheap to buy, another district, Darb al-Junaina, became the preferred residential area of the Maronites. Antun Marun bought a piece of land there in 1837 for the future erection of a church. A first chapel and a residence for the clergy were constructed around 1850. The formal consolidation of the community in Alexandria took – as was the case with the Greek Catholics – more time. But a permanent priest was attached to the Alexandrian community, presumably since 1845, as regular church registers were kept from this year on.

The indifference of the state toward distinctions between different religious communities was a fortuitous development, especially for the Greek Catholics as they were de jure still nonexistent and did not even enjoy the legal protection the *millet* status provided. It was not usually the state authorities who made the illegality of the Greek Catholic community an issue. Rather, it was the Greek Orthodox church, seeing its authority challenged and its community in the Arab provinces dwindling through conversion, which tried to check the development of Greek Catholicism. In 1818 there were heavy clashes between the two communities in Aleppo which led to the emigration of many Greek Catholics to Mt. Lebanon and Istanbul.[69] During the Greek war of independence, the Greek Orthodox church in the Ottoman Empire could not afford to agitate actively against the Greek Catholics. Soon thereafter, Egyptian forces occupied Syria and the Greek Catholics enjoyed the full protection of their coreligionist Hanna al-Bahri, head of the Egyptian administration. Yet even in Egypt the position of the Greek Catholics was so insecure that they chose to pay an annual tribute to the Greek Orthodox patriarchate in Alexandria in order to avoid unneccessary friction.[70]

Obtaining full legal recognition for his community became one of the major goals of Patriarch Maximos Mazlum (1833–1855), who can rightly be called the second founder of the Greek Catholic community. A serious dispute between his community and the Greek Orthodox church broke out over the question of clerical garb. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul tried to use this issue to reestablish his authority over the Greek Catholics. The dispute dragged on for fifteen years, with claims and counter-claims, with *firmans* issued and rescinded, with French interference on the Catholic side and Russian interference on the Orthodox side, all of which need not be detailed here.[71] The struggle of the Greek Catholics for legal recognition was not unique. Other uniate communities that had separated from the Armenian, Jacobite, and Nestorian churches fought at the same time for the achievement of legal recognition and autonomy.

A first major victory for Maximos Mazlum was a *berat*, issued by the Ottoman government in October 1837, which gave him almost all the recognition and author-

68 Ibid., 125/6.
69 Qar'ali 1933, 5, 13–29; *Mukhtasar*, 18–20.
70 Clot, II, 134.
71 See for instance Charon, II, 160–216; Mazlum.

ity enjoyed by the heads of the traditional *millets* over his community. For the first time, the Ottoman government took official notice of the Greek Catholic community's existence and the leadership of its patriarch. Maximos Mazlum's authority, however, was still limited by the fact that he was considered only a representative of the Armenian Catholic Patriarch, who had been made head of all Ottoman Catholics after becoming the first officially recognized uniate patriarch. Neither Maximos Mazlum nor, for that matter, the Greek Orthodox church was satisfied with the results and the dispute between them continued for another eleven years. For some of this time, Maximos Mazlum resided in Egypt. The stand of Muhammad 'Ali in this affair is noteworthy. He did not consider it his task to uphold any abstract principles of religious tolerance or to defend the claims of the Greek Catholics consistently. His overriding concern was the reduction of intercommunal friction and foreign interference. He usually tried to implement the often contradictory decrees emanating from Istanbul, not wanting to burden his already strained relations to the High Porte with this issue.

In January 1848, Maximos Mazlum finally received from the Ottoman government full legal recognition and authority for his community equal to that of the traditionally existing and newly established *millets*. The major points of this lengthy document[72] were the following: recognition of Maximos Mazlum as head of all Greek Catholics with the title Patriarch of Antioch, answerable only to the government in Istanbul; guarantee of complete freedom to practice the Greek Catholic faith; complete authority of the patriarch over his clergy; questions of civil law to be dealt with by the church and its head according to the tenets of the faith; right of the Patriarch to collect alms and revenues from his community; prohibition of the Ottoman authorities from interfering with the decisions of the Patriarch, even if a Greek Catholic individual should turn to them for support; obligation of the authorities to implement the Patriarch's rulings in his community; exemption of church properties from taxes, and of contributions in kind sent to the Patriarch from all customs.

This decree has been described as the final step of the Greek Catholics' emancipation, now *"complètement emancipés au civil"*.[73] But before we come to hasty conclusions about emancipation, or even civil emancipation, it is worth our while to consider the real implications of this document. The Greek Catholics were certainly freed from Greek Orthodox tutelage and granted the status of legal subjects. However, they were not emancipated as individuals with equal rights under the same laws as all the other subjects of the Ottoman Empire, as the Khatt-i Humayun of Gülhane had envisioned. They were emancipated as a community. Their community now had the same right to autonomy as all the other *millets*. Ironically, this did not result in a greater integration of all groups into one Ottoman society but, on the

72 Charon, II, 202–207; for the Arabic version of the *firman* see Mazlum, appendix, 305–313.
73 Charon, II, 201.

contrary, drew the lines distinguishing these groups from each other even more sharply. The underlying centrifugal forces were reinforced by the increasing interference of various European powers, which began to protect and to promote the rights of various *millets* for their own purposes. The emancipation of groups rather than individuals froze the differences between various sections of the Ottoman population into permanence. In some instances this led eventually to violent nationalist eruptions. Other minorities, such as the Greek Catholics, where too weak and diffuse to even attempt the creation of a nationalist program. But legitimized as separate entities in their religious framework, they were permanently prevented from full integration with society.

As far as the inner structure of the Greek Catholic community was concerned, it should be remembered that during the eighteenth century its organization was informal, with some of the more influential merchants guiding its affairs. In this context, the decreee of 1848 cannot be considered a civil emancipation. On the contrary, the authority of the church was now fully backed by the power of the state. The inalienability and tax-exemption of church property, together with the right to collect its own revenues, gave the church material independence from the commercial class. With the exception of serious criminal offenses and litigations concerning people outside the community, the jurisdiction of the church over community members was fairly complete. As the patriarchal archives in Cairo reveal, not only questions of marriage and inheritance dispute were dealt with by the church: business contracts were frequently supervised by and deposited with church authorities, who also settled disputes over debts and issued laissez-passers for travel abroad and testimonies of good conduct.

The clergy took on a much more assertive role in guiding and controlling the daily life of the community. In 1842, the Greek Catholic community of Cairo was reprimanded for playing cards for money and inviting singers to their houses. A year later, the patriarchal representative Basilius decided that ignorance of the religion and its rites made Sunday school necessary. All boys and girls had to attend. In 1844, a community member in Fayyum was excommunicated for illicit relations with a slave girl; all Greek Catholics were ordered to shun him. In 1851 and 1866, we find long exhortations addressed to all the community to avoid excessive mourning ceremonies -- a habit they had apparently picked up from the Egyptians. Marriage contracts were regulated and restricted to girls older than twelve. Between the writing of the contract and the actual wedding not more than a year could pass. The bride-price was fixed at a maximum of 500 ghurush. Further, all the flock was admonished to appear regularly in church to attend mass. The clergy also prohibited the holding of religious ceremonies at private homes and the attendance of mass at other than Greek Catholic churches.[74]

74 *Sijill a'mal al-batrakkhana al-kanasiya wa'l-madaniya 1838–1855*, 20 Oct. 1842, 10 Oct. 1843, 10 July 1844, 11 Oct. 1866. (Greek Catholic Archives, Cairo).

At a time when secularization made its first inroads into Egyptian society and the Ottoman Empire in general, the minorities were subjected more completely than before to religious law and the jurisdiction of the church. The decree of 1848 can therefore be considered a triumph for the ecclesiastical organization but should not be viewed as the emancipation of the individual Greek Catholic subject of the Ottoman government.

Maximos Mazlum not only fought for the formal recognition of his church and community, but also concerned himself with the internal organization and the consolidation of patriarchal authority. At the council of 'Ain Traz in 1835, common guidelines were established for rites, feasts, fastings, functions of the clergy and the orders, provision for the poor, etc.[75] The Greek Catholics in Egypt had been officially under the authority of the Patriarch of Antioch since 1772. But relations had been loose and indirect, maintained by the monks of the San Salvatore order, who were answerable to their superior rather then to the Patriarch. In 1835, the Cairene Greek Catholics suggested the establishment of a bishopric in their city and elected Basilius al-Kafuri for this task. The latter was eventually appointed patriarchal vicar, but only after Maximos Mazlum had made it clear that this vicar was to be appointed by the Patriarch and not elected by the local community, and that the bishop was only the representative of the Patriarch.

In 1836 Maximos Mazlum arrived in Egypt with his newly appointed vicar. For the next four years he concentrated his efforts on organizing the church in Egypt. Records for baptism, marriage, and death were established for the communities in Alexandria and Cairo, by far the largest in Egypt. Only in Damiette did baptism and marriage records kept jointly by the Maronites and the Greek Catholics go back to the beginnings of the century. There had existed during the eighteenth century a Greek Catholic chapel in the private residence of the Fir'aun family. But the first regular Greek Catholic church in Egypt was built in 1838–1839 in Darb al-Junaina in Cairo.[76] Nearby, a building was bought for the patriarchal residence. Darb al-Junaina became the new residential center of the Greek Catholics – as well as the Maronites – in Cairo. The Bahri family had already established its luxurious residence there by 1815. "He ('Abbud al-Bahri) had taken in Darb al-Junaina the house of al-Qaisarli and the neighboring property and established there a grandiose residence which he had embellished. There he had laid out a garden and sitting-places with colored marble and fountains, with gold trinkets and crystal glass."[77]

The formalization of their internal organization, the official recognition of their legal status, and their physical concentration in one residential area made the Greek Catholics a more distinct group than ever. *"Les Syriens (catholiques du rite grec) s'allient ordinairement entre eux et perpétuent, avec leur race, leurs moeurs et leurs*

75 Charon, II, 144.

76 The church in Damiette was, of course, much older but was first run by Maronites alone and since 1787 run jointly with Greek Catholic clergy.

77 Jabarti, IV, 303.

usages," commented an eyewitness.[78] At a time when the commercial class of the Greek Catholics had lost much of its previous wealth and influence, these developments occurred under the auspices of a strengthened church which gave the community a stronger religious identity. Just when the traditional patterns of Egyptian society began to break down and secular trends became visible, the Greek Catholic community achieved, ironically, its long-standing aim of becoming a full-fledged, formally recognized *dhimmi* group.

The development of the Maronite communal organization in Egypt had basically followed the same patterns as that of the Greek Catholic. The establishment of a complete ecclesiastical organization for each community reduced their earlier collaboration in church matters. The affinity of the two communities in social and cultural terms remained strong, as can be seen from the common trend to make Darb al-Junaina their residential center. But their "achievement" in establishing autonomous and fully recognized religious communities made their segregation from Egyptian society more permanent and conspicuous. Genuine integration became less likely than ever.

78 Clot, II, 134.

CHAPTER 3

MIGRATIONAL PATTERNS AND OCCUPATIONAL TRENDS SINCE THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Syrian immigration to Egypt resumed. Migration was becoming a widespread phenomenon in the Eastern Mediterranean, reflecting the areas link-up with the European-dominated world economy and the resulting changes in local economies. In addition, steamships now provided a cheap, safe, and fast means of transportation, making migration more feasible.

As part of this phenomenon Syrians emigrated to North and South America, West Africa, the Philippines – and, once more, to Egypt, along with Maltese, Italian, Greek and other emigrants. The foreign population of Egypt jumped from about 3,000 around 1850 to over 125,000 by 1900. These figures do not include Syrians, who as Ottoman subjects had no foreign status in Egypt. But a look at the birth statistics of their communities proves the rapid increase of the Syrian population in Egypt.

In religious composition, occupational structure, place of origin and numerical size this wave of Syrian emigration differed decidedly from the emigration in the eighteenth century.

On the basis of the commercial treaty concluded between Britain and the Ottoman Empire in 1838, the monopoly economy of Muhammad 'Ali in Egypt was effectively dismantled after 1840. This step opened Egypt once again to entrepreneurial trade. But by this time, the European merchants and commercial houses dominated Egyptian commerce. By and large, the Syrian merchant could hope only for a secondary role as trader or agent for one of the European companies. In addition, he now found himself in increasing competition with new, and often better placed, minorities such as the Greeks, Italians, and Maltese. The trade between Syria and Egypt, the traditional domain of the Syrian trader, became comparatively unimportant.

In the 1840's and 1850's, Syria and especially the Mt. Lebanon region were shaken by social unrest and bloody intercommunal clashes. The Muslim and Druze reaction to the advancement of the Christians during the Egyptian occupation set in immediately after Ibrahim Pasha was forced to surrender Syria to the Ottoman government in 1840. The struggle was especially intense in Mt. Lebanon where the Druze tried to reassert their lost position of domination over the Maronites. The attempts of the Ottoman government during these two decades to implement the reform principles of the *Tanzimat* – which, among other things, gave Christians a status equal to that of other Ottoman subjects – led to general opposition by Druze

and Muslims elements. This culminated in the civil war in Lebanon in 1860 and the massacre of Christians in Damascus in the same year.

These events shook Syria profoundly and caused a great deal of dislocation. People fled from their villages to the cities and later from Damascus to Beirut. At first the refugees constituted a serious problem there, but eventually contributed to Beirut's rapid growth. It is also apparent from the consular reports that, after calm had been established, indemnities paid, and villages reconstructed, many of the refugees returned home.[1]

The predominantly Greek Catholic population of Zahle had aroused the ire of the neighboring Druze by collaborating with the Egyptian occupation forces and supplying provisions to the Egyptian army for profit. In 1860, Zahle was conquered by the Druze and destroyed. Yet the population which fled eventually returned and Zahle became, once more, a prosperous center of the Greek Catholic community.[2] Only from Damascus – scene of the bloodiest events – did some emigrants go overseas.[3]

On the whole, the civil strife of this period seems to have had very little direct impact upon emigration to Egypt. That point is confirmed if we look at the careers of some of the better known Syrian emigrants to Egypt in the second half of the nineteenth century. Salim Taqla (1849–1893), the founder of the newspaper *al-Ahram*, was sent from his native village, Kafr Shima, when he proved to be gifted. His father wanted him to attend the missionary school in 'Abaih. The civil strife of 1860 closed the school, and the boy went to Beirut, where first he became a teacher and then the headmaster of the Patriarchal School. In the early seventies, finding his professional oportunities in Beirut too limited, he migrated to Alexandria.[4]

For the founders of the magazines *al-Muqtataf* and *al-Muqattam*, Faris Nimr and Ya'qub Sarruf, it was the Protestant dogmatism of the Syrian Protestant College that made them leave Beirut in 1884 to look for better opportunities in Egypt.[5] It was not Muslim persecution nor Ottoman oppression but the administration and faculty of the college that clamped down on their mildly Darwinist ideas.

The family of Jurji Zaidan (1861-1914) migrated during the unrest of 1840 from the Mountain to Beirut for much the same reasons. Zaidan was locked out from the Syrian Protestant College after having participated in a student strike supporting the Darwinist faction. In 1882 he turned to Egypt, hoping to continue his medical studies there.[6]

1 Dufferin to Bulwer, Damascus Dec. 4, 1860 (FO 406–410).
2 Naff, 438.
3 Apparently the Greek consular agent in Damascus encouraged the Christians to emigrate to "the unpeopled plains of Greece". Frazer to Russel, Damascus, Oct. 20, 1860 (FO 406–410).
4 Zaidan 1922, II, 89–94.
5 Farag 1972, 73–84.
6 Philipp 1979, 24.

Adib Ishaq (1856–1885) grew up in Damascus and went to the Lazarist school. He came to Beirut in his teens looking for a job. For a while, he found work as an employee in the customs administration and participated in various literary activities. In 1877 he followed a friend to Egypt, where he dedicated himself exclusively to writing and publishing.[7]

Salim Sidnawi (1856–1908) also grew up in Damascus, where his father was a merchant. Salim learned the trade of European tailoring. In 1879 he followed his brother to Egypt. In Cairo they set up a store which was destined to become one of the largest department stores in Egypt.[8]

Undeniably, the combined force of civil unrest in Syria and the economic opening of Egypt resulted in a limited increase of Egypt's Syrian population in the 1840's and 1850's. Immigration, however, began to grow in earnest only in the 1860's and 1870's and accelerated even more toward the turn of the century.

Until the reign of Muhammad 'Ali, the majority of Greek Catholic and Maronite immigrants had come from Aleppo and Damascus, and to a lesser degree from the coastal towns of Syria.[9] This pattern shifted profoundly during the second phase of immigration.

Table 7: Origins of Syrians in Egypt (in percentages)

origin	all Catholics Damiette 1809	register of Maronite marriages Cairo 1820–40	1875–94	register of Gr. Catholic Marriages Alexandria 1888–1897	register of Gr. Orthodox Baptisms (fathers) Alexandria 1901
Aleppo and Damascus	50	43	10½	11	10
coastal towns	27	30	10½	16	53
inland	17	23	79	60	30
others	6	4	–	13	7
total number of incidents	50	160	364	388	65
information available on	50	67	206	82	65

In the Greek Orthodox case the category "coastal towns" is problematic. Two thirds of all Greek Orthodox came from Beirut and Latakia. The term "Latakia" may well include the hinterland of the city. Beirut itself was growing rapidly through

7 Zaidan 1922, I, 69.
8 Zaidan 1922, I, 302–309.
9 Khuri 67–69, quoting the priest Antun Marun.

immigration at that time, and it may very well be that many of those indicating Beirut as place of origin originally came from other places. In view of these considerations, the actual number of immigrants originally from the hinterland would be much higher than indicated here and the number of people coming from coastal towns lower.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a majority of Maronites and Greek Catholics and a substantial number of Greek Orthodox came directly from the countryside, mainly from the Mt. Lebanon area. Their origin points to the cause for their emigration: the agricultural economy of the area.

The staple of agriculture in the Mt. Lebanon area was silk. It is common to attribute the crisis of silk production in Syria to the import of cheap East Asian silk into France, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal. This in turn is used as an explanation for the mass migration toward the end of the century from the Lebanese area to South and North America, West Africa, and Egypt. But this argument is of only limited validity. The reasons for the economic crisis which undoubtedly arose in Syria are of a far more complex nature.

Between 1862 and 1910 the annual production of silk cocoons in the Mt. Lebanon area actually more than tripled – from 1.9 million kg. to 6.2 million kg.[10] There were, of course, some variations in the production rate. Production hit an all-time low in the mid-seventies when disease destroyed part of the crop. But the collapse of Syrian-Lebanese sericulture did not really occur until the 1920's with the spread of artificial fibers. Yet, even before World War I, Ducousso and Ruppin[11] were warning that the future of sericulture in the area was precarious, that the rising price of land and the shortage of labor were the major obstacles to competitiveness of silk production on the world market. But these developments were the result of the preceding thirty years of mass emigration, not its cause. The quantity of cocoon production in itself does not offer any explanation for the mass emigration. Other aspects of sericulture in Syria provide a more helpful explanation.

1. Prices for cocoons rose steadily until the 1870's. After that they fluctuated somewhat, but on the whole declined. This trend can certainly be traced to East Asian competition for the European market. At the same time, some of the materials necessary for sericulture, such as mulberry leaves, became more expensive. The result of these developments was that the standard of living of the cultivator went down. In the eighteenth century, local merchants and potentates were often able to withhold the silk harvest from the market until the French merchants were willing to pay higher prices for it. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the world market for silk was so much more integrated that the local producer or merchant in Syria no longer had any say about the price his silk would bring in France.

10 Ducousso, 100–101.
11 Ducousso, 160; Ruppin, 50, 354.

2. The closer integration of the world economic system led to other results in the silk industry which were probably much more direct causes of emigration. The percentage of the total production destined for export rose consistently. By 1840, the French had established several modern silk filatures in Lebanon which made local silk threads competitive in the French market. Less and less raw silk was available for local processing. The decrease in the number of silk weavers in Syria reflects this trend.[12] After 1870, silk weaving diminished as demands for silk thread rose in the European market. Europeans supplied silk cloth to the local market, and the traditional export markets for Syrian silk textiles, namely Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, disappeared. What is not evident from the statistics is the destruction of the cottage industry of the peasants, for whom silk spinning and weaving always had been an important source of additional income.

Aside from Mt. Lebanon, there is only one other rural area from which many Greek Orthodox immigrants to Egypt originated in significant numbers: Latakia. Its major crop was tobacco. The government's policy of fixed prices for tobacco production, established in 1883, led to the impoverishment of the peasant and migration on a large scale in the next decade.[13]

But the cultivator and the artisan depending on agricultural raw materials were not the only ones to be hard-hit by the new structures of the world economy. The import of cheap and better European industrial products initiated the destruction of a wide variety of traditional manufacturers and crafts. Among the immigrants to Egypt we find former charcoal burners, gunpowder producers, miners, gunsmiths, etc.

In addition to the changes in the economic structure, the area almost doubled its population between 1861 and World War I. This population pressure added to the general economic malaise and strengthened the motivation for emigration.[14]

From 1840 to 1860, sectarian strife had led to considerable hardship and displacement among the population of Syria and Lebanon, but had caused only limited emigration. After 1860, when religious strife had subsided, emigration rose dramatically. The emigrants – almost exclusively Christians – originated mainly from the Mt. Lebanon area where the establishment of the *Mutasarrif* administration gave Christians a secure, even dominant position. The causes for emigration were therefore created by a deteriorating economic situation.

In contrast, during the sixties and early seventies Egypt was experiencing an economic boom based on cotton exports. Therefore it became the first destination of Syrian emigrants. Though migration to Egypt continued and even increased afterwards, it soon constituted only a fraction of the snowballing general emigration of Syrians turning mainly to the Western Hemisphere.

12 Ducousso, 180.

13 *Handbook of Syria*, 268.

14 Tannous, 63, pinpoints for the village of Bishmizzin 1890 as the time when the land-population balance was disturbed by overpopulation and beginning soil depletion.

At this point, however, we have to address ourselves to the very complex issue of the role religion played in emigration. We have argued that the economic depression was one of the major causes of emigration. It has been estimated that by World War I approximately 250,000 Syrians had emigrated to North and South America, West Africa and Egypt. Practically all of the emigrants were Christians. The Druze peasantry, economically as depressed and politically probably worse off than their Christian neighbors in the Mt. Lebanon area, migrated in limited numbers during this period to the South East of Mt. Lebanon. Almost no Druze chose America as an alternative. Muslim artisans in Damascus and Aleppo, and Muslim peasants in Syria generally, were hit even harder by economic changes during the nineteenth century. None ventured to emigrate. All this, however, cannot imply that the Muslims are a particularly stationary people. On the contrary, throughout history we can observe a relatively high mobility of Muslims within the Muslim world, be it as individuals or as groups. International trade, nomadism, pilgrimage to Mecca, and population movements from beyond the Muslim world all contributed to this mobility. Even during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, we find Muslims migrating. The direction of their movement, however, might shed some light on the issue: Muslims from the Balkan and the Caucasus – areas that had recently come under non-Muslim political control – migrated into the Ottoman Empire, an area which, at that time, hardly held economic promise for the Muslim immigrant.

It appears that religious factors at least contributed to, if not determined, the mode and direction of Muslim migration. Since its beginnings, the spread of the Islamic religion had been accompanied by the establishment of Muslim states. Islamic religion and Muslim statehood became closely associated and life for a Muslim outside the boundaries of the Muslim state was largely unimaginable. Thus Bosnian Muslims migrated to Anatolia when the Ottoman Empire was forced to surrender its control over the Balkans. This identification of religious life with a corresponding political entity seems to have worked as a strong emotional obstacle against emigration of Muslims into a non-Muslim country. It is questionable if such an explanation also holds true for Egypt, particularly after the British occupation of 1882. At least formally, Egypt remained part of the Ottoman Empire and its society was predominantly Muslim. In any case, all explanations citing the Phoenician heritage of *wanderlust* as a reason for nineteenth century emigration from Lebanon[15] must be put aside as sheer mythology. Only more specific and detailed research might eventually provide an explanation for the reluctance of Syrian Muslims to emigrate even to Egypt in spite of economic pressures, when their Christian neighbors were quite willing to do so.

Apart from the economic causes but indirectly related to them, another motive for emigration arose; the search for employment by graduates of the flourishing educational systems in Syria. Educated and professionally trained in an Arabic-

15 Shibli, passim; *al-Hilal*, I (1892/93), 275; XIII (1916/17), 14.

speaking environment, yet well-versed in European languages, these graduates would typically look to Egypt rather than to America as a possible goal for emigration.

Already in the 18th century, Jesuits had set up various schools in Damascus, Aleppo, and the Syrian coastal lands. The Maronites established their first modern college in 'Ain Waraqa in 1789. The Greek Catholics followed suit with a school in 'Ain Traz in 1811 and the Greek Orthodox with their Collège des Trois Docteurs in 1833.[16] In 1820 the first American missionaries arrived in Syria and soon afterwards the French Jesuits resumed their missionary work. Realizing quickly that direct missionizing attempts yielded few results even among the local Christians, the missionaries began to concentrate on education as an indirect way to approach the young. During the Egyptian occupation of Syria the educational efforts of the missionaries could flourish unhampered. As in Egypt herself, the Egyptian administration did not display a particular religious tolerance but rather a basic indifference. Nevertheless, by establishing a regime of law and order and public security it created in Syria the conditions for the initial success of the educational efforts of the missionaries.[17]

The fierce competition between the Catholic and Protestant missionaries had positive results for the growth of the educational system. In 1833, the American missionaries opened a boys' and a girls' school in Beirut. The Jesuits took over the college of 'Ain Tura. In quick succession both groups founded primary and secondary schools in various towns. The crowning success of their efforts was the establishment in Beirut of the Syrian Protestant College in 1866 (later to become the American University of Beirut) and of the Jesuit Université Saint-Joseph in 1875. During the second half of the 19th century, additional European, e.g. German and Russian, efforts helped to enlarge the educational system further. The local Christian communities began to sense the danger of losing their young generation to foreign missionary education. They therefore enlarged and improved their own communal educational systems. As unchristian in spirit as this rivalry between the various communities and missionary efforts might have been, it was highly beneficial to the rise of the educational level of the local population. In the last third of the 19th century primary education was available (though not obligatory) in the Mt. Lebanon area and the coastal towns of Syria to practically every local Christian boy and most girls. To the gifted, regardless of social background, secondary education was accessible and could lead to college and professional education.

The development of this newly educated class stood in no relation to the economic possibilities of the area to absorb it. At the same time, the Egyptian educational system, such as it was, could not satisfy Egypt's need for trained people. Already under Isma'il, but even more so under British occupation, Egypt offered a

16 Hanf, 65.
17 Tibawi, 61.

variety of positions and careers to the educated, professionally trained, and often multilingual Syrian youth.

For 120 Syrians who immigrated between 1860 and 1910 we have in the *Collected Biographies* the precise dates of their graduation from high school, college, or professional school in Syria and the dates of their immigration to Egypt. Correlating the two sets of dates, we find that 77 or 64% of graduates left for Egypt within a year after graduation. Most of the other third came within five years, frequently having used this period for further studies in Istanbul, France or America.

We know of 24 medical doctors immigrating between 1884 and 1910. Almost all had received their training at the medical school of the Syrian Protestant College. Some were employed by the civil administration but at least 15 served in the Egyptian army, mainly in the Sudan.

Of 72 immigrants who entered government service in Egypt between 1869 and 1910, only 11 came before 1882. Of the 61 immigrants who came after the British occupation, almost half (27) worked in the Sudanese administration. Most were employed by the Egyptian government as accountants, translators, or medical doctors.[18]

In addition to the economic and educational motives for emigration there appeared during the last two decades before World War I a political one: as the screws of political repression were turned tighter by the 'Abdulhamidian regime, some educated and politicized young Syrians, especially Muslims, ran afoul of the Ottoman secret police. Several were arrested, as was 'Abd ar-Rahman al-Kawakibi (arrived in Egypt in 1898) or shaikh Kamil al-Qassab (1890). Others, such as Haqqi al-'Azm (1890) or 'Abd al-Masih al-Antaki (1897), were under police surveillance for suspicious activities. Farah Antun was forbidden to publish (1897). Salim Ibrahim Qabba'in (1897) was found to be actively involved in anti-Ottoman activities in Nazareth. Their number was small and they hardly add to the overall demographic picture of the immigration. They were political exiles rather then emigrants and many would return to Syria after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Yet they contributed to the shift of focus, from Egypt to Syria, in the political preoccupations of the Syrian intelligentsia.

Patterns of geographic origin and timing of immigration seem to have been fairly similar for the three major groups, i.e. Maronites, Greek Catholics, and Greek Orthodox. But in one respect, the emigration patterns of the three groups differed radically from each other. The size of the emigrant community in Egypt did not correlate with the total size of the respective community in Syria or Lebanon.

Statistical information for the whole period is notoriously imprecise. Any indication of numbers is usually more a political statement than a reflection of actual

18 The reader should again be warned that the *Collected Biographies* do not constitute a complete record of immigrants but can help us to discern certain trends.

size. The following estimates are indeed only estimates. If we use the extremely low birthrate of 27/1000 we obtain roughly the following figures for Egypt in 1910: 10,000 Greek Catholics, 6,000 Maronites, and 5,000 Syrian Greek Orthodox. Most estimates are higher, up to a maximum of 15,000, 9,000, and 6,000 respectively. But the relative sizes vary only a little.

Estimates for Syria during the same period are even more hazardous. The *Handbook on Syria* by the British Naval Staff gives the following estimates for 1914–1915: 300,000 Maronites, 280,000 Greek Orthodox, and 140,000 Greek Catholics.[19] Again, the absolute numbers may be debated but the relative sizes are consistent with other figures and therefore seem acceptable. On the basis of the minimum estimates for Egypt, it would seem that roughly one of 15 Greek Catholics, one of 50 Maronites, and one of 60 Greek Orthodox had emigrated to Egypt. On the basis of maximum estimates, it would seem that one of 10 Greek Catholics, one of 33 Maronites and one of 48 Greek Orthodox had chosen to go to Egypt. In any case, Greek Catholics were relatively more inclined to emigrate to Egypt than Maronites or Greek Orthodox. While in Syria, the Greek Catholics constituted slightly less than 20% of these three communities, in Egypt they represented almost 50% of the total.

A comparison with Syrian/Lebanese emigration to the United States during this time might shed additional light on the issue. Until 1914, about 108,000 immigrants of the three communities had arrived. Of those, roughly 54,000 were Maronites, 18,000 were Greek Catholic, and 36,000 were Greek Orthodox.[20] In view of the various indications the conclusion can be drawn that in all three communities,

19 *Handbook on Syria*, 175.

20 *Reports*, 46, and *Annual Statistics of U.S. Immigration* indicate for 1899–1914 a total of 18,111 Syrian immigrants. The total immigration in the preceding years is estimated here at about 20,000. Miller, 11, gives the following denominational breakdown: Maronites 740, Greek Catholics 941, Greek Orthodox 615, Protestants 178, Druze 3, Muslim 2, Mutawali 2, Hebrew 1. Hitti, 104–105, estimates for 1924 the following:

	persons	number of churches	churches per capita
Maronites	95,000	37	1/2500
Greek Orthodox	85,000	30	1/2500
Greek Catholics	10,000	21	1/490
Protestants	5,000	2	1/2500

The total of 200,000 seems very high. A mere 5% for the Greek Catholics is most unlikely in view of L.H. Miller's partial study, but also in light of the numbers of churches Hitti indicates for each community. There is no reason why there should be five times as many churches per Greek Catholic population than for all the other communities. Another source, Kayal, 125, gives for the 1960's the following estimates: Maronites 150,000, Greek Catholics 50,000. *Le Lien*, X (1945), 34, and XIV (1949), 125, suggests that by 1950 there were 25,000 Greek Catholics in Egypt 100,000 in Syria/Lebanon, and 125,000 in North and South America. This seems to be a high estimate but would indicate that by 1950 a majority of Greek Catholics had left their homeland.

before World War I, one out of seven or one out of eight had emigrated to the United States. This leads to the following observations:

1. The tendency to emigrate to North America was very strong and almost equally so among all three communities at the end of the nineteenth century.

2. Compared to Maronites and Greek Orthodox, the Greek Catholics were far more inclined to emigrate to Egypt. Two factors seem to account for this difference: (a) At the beginning of the mass migration in the late nineteenth century, Egypt already had a sizable Greek Catholic community. Its organization and the many existing family links to Syria therefore made Egypt more palatable. (b) The Greek Catholic community had a greater percentage of educated members than the other communities. The likelihood of such individuals finding positions commensurate with their education and language skills was much greater in Egypt than America.

Apart from the overproportional representation of the Greek Catholic emigrants, however, we can observe an extraordinary similarity among the demographic patterns of development for all three communities in Egypt. Dramatic increases in the number of births occurred between the 1870's and 1920's. World War I put an end to the flow of Syrian immigrants. British-occupied Egypt became enemy territory, inaccessible to Ottoman subjects. The break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of local states in the area after the war put new obstacles in the way of potential immigrants. The number of births in the Syrian communities of Egypt, though, continued to increase as the first generation of Egyptian-born Syrians reached adulthood. In the 1920's the number of births levelled off, then dropped slightly for all three communities in the thirties and increased again in the forties. During the 1960's the Syrian communities in Egypt virtually disappeared. The similarity of development becomes even more striking if we compare communal developments in Cairo, Alexandria and the provinces:

1. The settlement of Syrians in Egypt was overwhelmingly urban, though information about their geographic origins indicates that they usually came from a rural background.

2. Whenever Syrians settled in the Egyptian provinces they usually went to the Delta area, sometimes to the Fayyum, and only very rarely to Upper Egypt. Before World War I, the number of Syrian births in the provinces had already begun to level off and even to drop. Better economic prospects in the metropolitan areas, after one had accumulated some capital in the less competitive provinces, were an obvious motive. Better educational facilities in Alexandria and Cairo were also given as a reason for moving on. The claim that nationalist political unrest in the twenties caused Syrians to move to the presumably greater security of the big cities is not borne out by the statistics.

3. Far more intriguing is the comparison between the demographic development of the communities in Cairo and Alexandria. For Greek Catholics, Cairo was always the most populous center of their community. By the first half of the nineteenth century most Greek Catholics were already living in Cairo, but Alexandria was the

port of entry and its economic opportunities led the Greek Catholic community to develop rapidly there as well. At the end of the nineteenth century, it rivaled the Cairene community in size. Neither the Maronites nor the Greek Orthodox had sizable communities in Cairo at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Their communities grew first in the port of arrival, Alexandria. However, by the 1920's the Maronite community of Cairo had reached the same size as that of Alexandria. The same observation can be made for the Greek Orthodox community somewhat later, in the 1940's. The delay in this development in the Greek Orthodox case probably had to do with the fact that the center for Greek Orthodoxy in Egypt was the Patriarchal See in Alexandria. Occupational differences among the communities may also have caused the delay in the shift of the Syrian Greek Orthodox population to Cairo.

In all three communities we can observe that the number of births in Alexandria leveled off in the twenties, began to drop in the thirties, and never recovered. In Cairo, on the other hand, birthrates continued to rise throughout the twenties, dropped slightly during the thirties, and increased dramatically during the forties. Since the sixties they have dropped drastically in all places. Clearly, then, from the twenties until the forties we can observe an internal migration of Syrians from Alexandria to Cairo. Some reasons can be suggested for this movement:

1. Until 1936 the Greeks enjoyed the benefits of the capitulations, while the large majority of the Syrians had adopted Egyptian citizenship. This gave the Greeks a competitive edge over the Syrians, especially in trade. This disadvantage must have been felt more in commercial Alexandria than in administrative Cairo.

2. We have evidence for occupational shifts among the Syrians during this time, perhaps caused by their losing ground in the commercial sector. The trend is away from trade and toward salaried employment in companies and government and – to a degree – toward the professions. This trend, combined with a greater amount of education, may have made Cairo the more attractive city.

3. Alexandria's wealth was built mainly on foreign trade. It was, therefore, harder hit by the depression than Cairo was. The minorities, with a disproportionately high involvement in commerce, were more exposed to the consequences of this crisis. In 1937, a Catholic organization, Solidarité Chrétienne, was founded in Alexandria and functioned as an informal labor office. It catered mainly to Maronites and Greek Catholics. It tried, with little success, to place an increasing number of unemployed people in jobs.[21]

4. In Cairo, we were repeatedly told, the bombardments of Alexandria during World War II and the fear of approaching Axis forces led many Syrians to flee to Cairo. In the reports of the benevolent societies of the Cairene communities, we actually find during these years a budget for the absorption of refugees from Alexandria.[22] Though this may serve as a partial explanation, it certainly does not help

21 *Le Lien*, VI (1941), 77–79.

22 *Le Lien*, VI (1941), 295–296, estimates some 300–400 Greek Catholic refugees.

to clarify the original causes for this internal migration which had already begun in the twenties.

Aspects of close social interaction and features of trans-sectarian identity common to all Syrians may be observed by looking at the settlement of the Syrians within one city. In Cairo, the Greek Catholic and the much smaller Maronite communities centered during the rule of Muhammad 'Ali in Darb al-Junaina just outside the northern city wall. Here they also built their first churches. By the end of the nineteenth century, most had moved to Fajjala and Shubra, new and flourishing districts. The patriarchal seats of the Maronites and Greek Catholics were moved there in 1889 and 1903 respectively. The only Syrian Greek Orthodox church ever to be built in Cairo was opened, in 1938, in the same neighborhood. The area seems also to have attracted Syrian Muslims. The only mosque known as "Syrian" in Cairo was built around 1880 by the Hamawi family in close-by Bab al-Bahr.[23] The Halawis from Ghazza settled in Dahir in 1919, as did other Muslim families.[24]

Table 8: Addresses of Maronite weddings 1913–1919

25 Shubra	4 Muski
46 Fajjala	1 Darb al-Junaina
5 Others	
21 Street names not identified[25]	

Table 9: Distribution of Greek Catholic families in Cairo 1919[26]

Fajjala	544
Shubra	324
City	119
Heliopolis	129
Darb al-Junaina	39
Others	45
Total	1200 Families (5745 individuals)

In the twenties most Syrians lived in the Fajjala/Shubra area, with Heliopolis having the second largest concentration. In Heliopolis, the first Greek Catholic and Maronite churches were built in 1910 and 1917 respectively, and in 1940 the Greek Catholics added a second church for their community there. Judging from the

23 *Masjid as-Sitt ash-shamiya (al-Manar* X (1907), 537–538); Mubarak, V, 15, calls it the mosque of *as-Sitt Salima al-Halabiya.*

24 Interview with 'Ismat Halawi, Cairo, July 1982.

25 Taken from the Maronite Register of Marriages in Cairo. Of the total of 225 marriages (addresses were given only for 102) 15 ceremonies were held in the new church in Heliopolis, opened in 1917.

26 Taken from *Taqarir al-hai'a an-niyabiya li-ta'ifat al-kathulikiyin al-malakiyin bi'l-Qahira*, 1918–1921, 65–66 (Greek Catholic Archives Cairo).

number of marriages registered, the Maronite church in Heliopolis was more important than the church in Shubra by the thirties. Today, the Syrians have left the Fajjala/Shubra area as a residential quarter, though some still have their businesses there. The area has become much poorer. Those Syrians who are still left in Cairo live mostly in Heliopolis, a relatively well-to-do middle-class district.

Summarizing the evidence, we can observe that throughout the period Syrians showed the same pattern of province-city and intercity migration regardless of their religious background. They also tended to live together in the same city districts. The particular choice of district also reflected their general socioeconomic status.

The occupational background of the immigrants, though often the cause for emigration, rarely determined what they did in the land of immigration. Data for the occupational structure of the Syrians in Egypt are scarce and often impressionistic. Only in the case of the Greek Orthodox community in Alexandria do we have fairly regular information, at least for the years after 1875.

It is probably correct to state that most immigrants in the eighteenth century had been merchants or skilled artisans and continued to pursue those occupations in Egypt. But commercial attraction and opportunity decreased after the end of the century.

If we look at the available statistical information on occupations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, several patterns of development become clear:

1. The Greek Orthodox community witnessed a clear shift in occupation from trade and craft to white-collar jobs and the professions. The much scarcer information for the Greek Catholics seems to support a similar conclusion for them. Information from individual Maronite families points in the same direction. The absence of workers and peasants is noticeable, though in the second half of the nineteenth century a large number of immigrants came from a rural background. Agricultural occupations would either have left the immigrant landless and therefore impoverished, the very condition he had tried to escape, or brought him into direct competition with a well-established Egyptian landowning class. The number of Syrian large landowners remained negligible until the Nasser regime and the general exodus of the Syrians from Egypt. The relative weakness of the indigenous merchant class and the profitable connection with foreign economic interests made trade an attractive avenue to prosperity for the Syrian immigrant even when he did not possess any initial investment capital. However, the Syrians encountered increasing competition in the field of commerce from other immigrant minorities, who were usually better placed, because as foreigners they enjoyed the legal advantages of the capitulation system.

Table 10: Occupational distribution (in percentages) of Syrian Greek Orthodox fathers of children baptized in Alexandria

	1875	1891	1901	1911	1931	1951–52
commerce entrepreneurs	33	32	28	25	30	19
retail trade	28	32	21	20	7	1
professions	–	–	4	4	5	9
employees	5	5	18	15	35	59
crafts	33	30	28	36	21	12
workers	–	–	–	–	2	–

Table 11: Distribution of professions (in percentages)

	all Catholics[27] 1809 Damiette	Greek Catholics[28] marrying men 1941–43 Cairo
commerce	26	16
employees	41	59
artisans	20	8
professions	–	14
poor	13	–
workers	–	3
total incidents	58	268

Among those immigrants who had started out in commerce, many, especially in the second generation, turned for employment to various government agencies and increasingly to foreign companies. Their languages and education prepared them well for such work. Since almost all Syrians adopted Egyptian nationality after 1922, foreign companies could also use them to fill the prescribed quotas for employment of Egyptian nationals. In addition there were, of course, those Syrians who had come to Egypt specifically for employment in government administration or private companies. Their presence in such positions made it easier for other Syrians to enter the field later on.

2. The general occupational trends were the same in all three communities. But we can detect a certain differential between the communities in terms of time. By and large, Greek Catholics and Maronites were employees and went into the professions earlier than Greek Orthodox. Of some 300 biographies of Syrians, practically all of whom immigrated to Egypt in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the following occupational picture emerges:

27 Khuri, 67–68.
28 *Le Lien*, VII (1942), 255–258; VIII (1943), 68–69.

Table 12: Distribution (in percentages) of professions according to denomination (from Collected Biographies)

	Greek Orthodox	Greek Catholic	Maronite
merchants	33	20	15
government employees	18	13	31
medical doctors	4	8	–
journalists, writers, etc.	21	20	22
lawyers	4	13	13
teachers	3	4	6
others	21	22	13

This distribution shows a comparative prominence of Greek Catholics (and Maronites) in law, teaching, and medicine, where more formal education is required.

The sample is obviously skewed as it deals only with people who had some claim to fame and made it into the various biographical dictionaries and histories. Over-

Table 13: Occupational distribution (in percentages)

	Greek Catholics marrying Cairo 1941–43	Greek Orthodox fathers (baptism) Alexandria 1931	Greek Orthodox fathers (baptism) Cairo 1935
commerce entrepreneur	16	37	37
professions	14	5	14
employees	59	35	34
crafts	9	21	10
workers	3	2	5

all samples from the 1930's and 1940's show greater differences. Only one-sixth of the Greek Catholics were in business or trade while more than one-third of the Greek Orthodox were in that field. 59% of the Greek Catholics and 35% of the Greek Orthodox were salaried employees. Equally, the Greek Catholics were much less represented in the crafts and the working class than the Greek Orthodox. The reverse is true for the professions (14% of Greek Orthodox in the professions in Cairo seems very high judging from other years: 1914, 9%; 1955, 12%). The Greek Catholics were more heavily represented in the professions and white-collar jobs (government and foreign companies especially) in the 1930's than the Greek Orthodox, though the trend in the Greek Orthodox community was toward a similar occupational structure.

3. The cited statistics do not provide us with any indication about the role of the immigrants in the agricultural sector of Egypt. Though their role in this area was of little consequence, some comments about it seem necessary.

As has been mentioned earlier, many of the immigrants came from the rural background of an increasingly depressed peasantry. If these circumstances were motivation enough for migration, they were also sufficient cause for avoiding a similar socioeconomic situation in the land of immigration. We find, therefore, practically no immigrants who made their living in Egypt as peasants or land laborers.

There were, however, a few large landowners among the Syrians. It has been argued that the first private landholdings were formed by land grants given by Muhammad 'Ali to various high government officials.[29] While Syrians were noticeably absent from this group, it is not surprising that the Bahri family was one of the Syrian families to acquire large landholdings during this period. In 1841 Hanna al-Bahri received 100 faddan *ma'mur* land in Matariya and 500 faddan *ib'adiya* land in Asyut. During the reign of Sa'id Pasha, the Bahri family owned some 600 faddan in Qalyubiya, Jiza and Asyut.[30]

During the course of the century, individual families bought some agricultural land here and there. Even the Greek Catholic Patriarchate acquired 224 faddan of *waqf* land in Daqahliya, which the Khedive Isma'il had given in return for some real estate in Bulaq. Since the management of these lands was never quite successful, they were eventually sold in the 1940's.[31]

Only during the first years of the twentieth century was there a brief, dramatic increase in land acquisition by Syrians. Most of the land they bought came from the Da'ira as-Saniya land, of which 450,000 faddan were sold to private landowners between 1900 und 1905.[32] At that time, large land tracts were bought by Syrians but the total number of families involved was small. Most prominent among them were the Lutfallah, Sidnawi, Sa'b and Shadid families.[33] All of them had

29 Barakat, 71; Baer 1962, 13.

30 Barakat, 203. The Kahil family was granted 'Izbat al-Burj near Damiette by Muhammad 'Ali. The precise circumstances of this grant are not known any more (Interview with Mary Kahil, Nov. 1978).

31 *Le Lien*, Almanach 1942, 120; *A'mal al-Batrarkiya 1881–1890*, 131–132 (Greek Catholic Archives, Cairo), shows that in 1885 for instance revenues had not been collected for four years.

32 Baer 1962, 95.

33 Barakat, 202–206, has the following list of land acquistions by Syrians:

Habib Lutfallah	1903	4032 faddan
Salim Sidnawi	1900	1011 faddan
Salim Sidnawi	1903	1321 faddan
Salim Sidnawi	1904	535 faddan
Salim Sidnawi & others	1906	1052 faddan
Salim & Rizqallah Shadid	1900	20,000 faddan
Ya'qub Sarruf	1903	141 faddan
Sarruf & Nimr	1906	781 faddan

Also the Sa'b family acquired during this time considerable land holdings.

made their money elsewhere, usually in trade, and land acquisition was just one of many forms of investing their capital. Only the Sa'b family made land its major business. They founded a land purchasing and development company.

Though precise figures are not available, it seems that the Syrians never owned more than one percent of all the agricultural land in Egypt. This is still more than their numerical proportion in the total population but far less than their presence in Egyptian commerce, administration, and journalism. Their stake in Egyptian agriculture was also much less than that of the Armenians and Jews, especially when we consider the control of the latter two groups over the large land development companies. The Shirkat al-Buhaira, founded in 1881, possessed 150,000 faddan in 1895. It was managed by Nubar Pasha.[34] The Shirkat ash-Shaikh Fadl and Shirkat Kom Ombo were founded by the Suarez brothers and E. Kassel.[35] Most of the directors of Shirkat Kom Ombo came from local Jewish families such as the Rolos, Hararis, Cattauis, Suarez and Mussairis.[36]

Syrians, no doubt, owned land – some of them had even quite sizable holdings. The total owned by Syrians amounted to less than 1% of all agricultural land. It would be misleading to speak of a Syrian land-owning class or even of Syrian landowners. All of them belonged primarily to the commercial bourgeoisie, which eventually invested some of its surplus capital in land but never, with a few exceptions, made agriculture its business.

4. We have a few indications that a number of immigrants made their living as craftsmen and workers. In a list of all the guilds of Cairo in 1870 we find a special guild of "Syrian marble stone pavers", *murakhkhimun*, counting 27 members and existing independently from a general guild of *murakhkhimun* counting 230 members.[37] At the turn of the century Syrian workers could be found, especially in the cigarette factories.[38] Gardeners, cooks, and occasional laborers employed by the patriarchal residence in Cairo came more often than not from the local Muslim population – an indication that the pool of available Syrian labor cannot have been large.

5. The story of the Syrian immigrants in Egypt was not one of undiluted success. The various benevolent societies that sprang up during the 1880's continued to pay monthly support to dozens of families of their coreligionists. Nor were the poor, the unemployed, the orphaned, and the widowed the only ones to benefit from

34 Baer 1962, 68–69.

35 Barakat, 207.

36 Baer 1962, 130.

37 Mubarak, I, 99–101. In this list only very few guilds are differentiated by ethnicity, e.g. Armenian and Jewish jewellers' guilds. Syrians may, therefore, have been members in other guilds, without this being specifically expressed.

38 Though cigarette factories were usually in Greek hands, one was run by a Syrian family, The Bustany Cigarettes Co., founded in 1911. In 1961 50% of the shares were nationalized (*Stock Exchange Yearbook*, 1961, 605).

such contributions. Even people with menial jobs were dependent on this kind of support.[39] If the number of poor among the Syrians did not increase noticeably, it was because of remigration, which was observable throughout the entire period. From the budget of the Syrian Greek Orthodox benevolent society in Alexandria alone, we know that during the three decades preceding World War I it paid passage back to Syria for 50 to 100 destitute individuals per year.[40] The Greek Catholic Welfare society of Cairo between 1880 and 1888 paid the fare for 217 individuals returning to their home country.[41] There is no evidence how many of their poor coreligionists other communities aided in this fashion. Nor do we know how many went back on their own last pennies.

From the preceding discussion the following overall picture of the occupational trends among Syrian immigrants crystallizes: In the nineteenth century, the majority of immigrants came from an agricultural background, while a small but significant group came from an urban, educated background. We find no Syrians working as peassants or land-laborers and only a few as workers and artisans in the urban area. Most immigrants tried to improve their fortunes by entering the world of commerce, whether on the level of retail trade or international trade, while the educated Syrians went into professions and administration. During the twentieth century we can observe a clear trend away from commerce and enterprise into the professions and the salaried middle class as employees in government administration and increasingly in foreign and local business companies. Though many of the destitute immigrants did not stay in Egypt, the records of the welfare organizations show that there existed a continued need for support among the needier members of each community.

39 Vallet, 107, has the following to say about Syrian workers:
Les travaux fatigants et peu rémunérateurs ne sont pas leur (Syriens) fait. Leur souplesse d'esprit et leur ingéniosité les prédisposent aux affaires. La plupart ont reçu de l'instruction: ils savent lire et écrire la langue arabe et, grâce à leur faculté prodigieuse d'assimilation, apprennent en quelques années une ou parfois deux langues européennes. Ils sont pétits commerçants, employés de banques et aspirent tous ou bien à devenir fonctionnaires de l'État ou bien à établir pour leur compte un petit magasin ou une maison de commission.
Aux chemins de fer de l'État, à la Societé des Oasis, dans l'industrie du bâtiment, ils se comptent par unités. La Cie des Tramways du Caire emploie, dit on, comme wattmen, un certain nombre de Syriens. Mais la seule industrie ou Syriens et Armeniens soient véritablement representés est l'industrie cigaretière. Dans une seule fabrique, sur un effectif total de 212 ouvriers, nous avons relevé 43 Syriens et 29 Arméniens.
On pp. 106–111 he has a case study of a Syrian cigarette roller whose annual income of 4270 P.T. is supplemented by 611 P.T. and free medical care from communal benevolent societies. Yet he has to incur debts.

40 See the annual budget reports of the Societé de Bienfaisance Grèque Orthodoxe Syrienne in Alexandria.

41 *'Id al-Khamsin*, 20.

CHAPTER 4

THE SYRIAN INTELLIGENTSIA IN EGYPT: FAILED ATTEMPTS AT INTEGRATION

In the preceding chapter we considered the similarity of developmental patterns in the geographic and socioeconomic distribution of Syrian immigrants regardless of their sectarian background. In a general demographic sense, we are therefore justified in talking about the Syrian immigrants as one group. But if we now want to address ourselves to the question of this group's relations to and position in Egyptian society, we shall discover very quickly that different parts of the immigrant society responded quite differently to their Egyptian environment. The differentiation in response did not necessarily follow sectarian lines but rather the patterns of socioeconomic stratification.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century we are able to discern three major socio-occupational groups among the Syrians in Egypt:

1. Professionals, among whom journalists, editors and owners of periodicals were dominant, followed by employees in the various branches of the government administration.

2. The commercial class, which included independent businessmen as well as agents for foreign companies and contractors for various development projects.

3. Artisans, manual labor, and the poor.

Turning to an analysis of the first group, we find that it alone has been the object of scholarly study on the Syrians in Egypt. The cultural contributions and political ideas of Syrians connected with the press have been especially analyzed and studied in some detail. The approach of intellectual history is certainly valid and is particularly understandable in light of the existence and accessibility of primary sources. At the end of the nineteenth century, practically all Arab intellectuals were in one way or another connected with the press. Journals and newspapers became the most common vehicle for the expression of cultural concepts and political ideas. For the scholar of today, it is relatively easy to extract from these publications the intellectual trends and developments of the Syrian intellectuals in Egypt. Important as such analysis is, it would be completely misleading to use that research as a basis for conclusions about the cultural and political position of the rest of the Syrian emigrants. Though the professional and the commercial classes resembled each other in their material conditions, their different educational background and interests led – as we shall see – to the formation of different relations toward Egyptian society and to different cultural and political attitudes.

The appearance of a Syrian intelligentsia in Egypt had been one of the results of a widespread and advanced educational effort in Syria. French-speaking Jesuits and American Protestant missionaries had shifted their efforts from direct but unsuccessfull attempts at making converts among the local Christian communities to attracting the young by offering them a modern education. Fearful of losing their members to the missionaries, local communities were forced to build up competitive educational systems. This situation led, earlier than anywhere else in the Middle East, to the establishment of a system of schools accessible to most and offering instruction in modern fields of science and knowledge. The graduates of these schools usually had a intimate knowledge of French and/or English language and literature. They had been introduced to modern sciences and non-traditional concepts and thought. They knew Arabic well, but were not stifled by traditional training in this language. Many had acquired professional skills as pharmacists, doctors, and teachers. But the development of modern education in Syria was not accompanied by parallel economic developments, and the ability of the society at large to absorb its new intelligentsia remained extremely limited.

The ambitious plan of Khedive Isma'il to "make Egypt part of Europe" offered many opportunities to the modern educated and professional man. At the time, Egypt herself lacked the educational system to create a local intelligentsia of sufficient size. Language skills in both Arabic and Western languages made the educated Syrian especially qualified to assume new tasks in the modernizing process of Egypt. Feeling that their skills and talents were not needed in Syria, the educated came to Egypt in large numbers. Syrians worked as teachers and doctors; they entered the government administration; they introduced the Egyptian audience to modern theater; they virtually created the press in Egypt and for a while almost monopolized it.

The press in Egypt came into its own only under the rule of Khedive Isma'il. Of the 41 periodicals that made their appearance before 1882, 38 were started after Isma'il's accession to power. His government established subsidized professional journals and helped finance the infant private press.[1] The heyday of the press came under British occupation. Increasing potential readership, economic stability, and Cromer's benign neglect of the press (he considered it a mere safety valve for public emotions) – all contributed to its rapid development.

Table 14: Number of periodicals founded[2]

	Beirut	Cairo/Alexandria
1852–1882	26	41
1882–1908	43	604

1 Zaidan 196(?), IV, 57.

2 All statistics are compiled from Tarrazi.

While the press in Beirut and Syria was increasingly restricted by Ottoman censorship, the center of journalistic and indeed all Arab intellectual activity shifted to Egypt.

Though it was not always to their own advantage, Syrians were most visible in Egyptian journalism and were probably proportionally more represented in this field than any other. A few statistics can provide us with an idea of how large the Syrian involvement in the Egyptian press was. Between 1800 and 1914 a total of 790 newspapers and magazines were founded in Egypt. Of these, 150 were "owned by men whose names were recognizably Syrian"[3] – i.e. roughly one fifth of all the pre-World War I periodicals in Egypt belonged to Syrians. From 1873 until 1907, 648 new periodicals appeared on the market and 97 of them, or some 15%, were started by Syrians.[4] The involvement of Syrians in the Egyptian press becomes especially striking when compared with the overall population of Syrians in Egypt. According to the Egyptian census of 1907 there were 33,947 "Ottoman Syrians" out of a total population of 11.19 million, i.e. not even a third of one percent were Syrians.

Many of the newspapers and magazines were rather short-lived and had small circulations. A strictly quantitative analysis could therefore be misleading as to the true role of the Syrians in the Egyptian press. It should be pointed out that until World War I the most widely read and influential magazines – *al-Muqtataf* (founded in 1876), *al-Hilal* (1892), and *al-Manar* (1898) – were Syrian, while *al-Ahram* (1876) was the first regular daily and the most influential one until the creation in 1889 of *al-Muqattam*, which also was in Syrian hands. Only with the foundation of *al-Mu'ayyad* (1889), *al-Liwa'* (1900), and *al-Jarida* (1907) by Egyptians was the Syrian domination of the press seriously challenged.

Unfortunately, we have very little reliable statistical data about the role of the educated Syrians in the government administration of Egypt. But various contemporary reports can provide us with a fairly clear picture. A process of Arabization, which had been spreading since midcentury in the Egyptian administration, culminated in 1870 with legislation declaring Arabic the official language of all government administration (with the exception of the army, where Turkish prevailed). At the same time Khedive Isma'il's ambitious program for the Europeanization of Egypt expanded government activities into such areas as public education, development of communications, large scale public works and urban development.

The shift from Turkish to Arabic in administrative language and the rapid expansion of the administration itself made many government jobs available to Syrian immigrants at a time when only few Egyptians were qualified to occupy such positions. The number of Syrians in administration increased as European interference in and supervision of the Egyptian government raised the demand for bilingual

3 Hourani, 229.
4 S'lim, 175.

officials. After occupying Egypt in 1882, the British were in particular need of administrators proficient in Arabic as well as European languages. An English account of the situation in 1883 provides the following observations:

> In certain offices which have been remodelled according to foreign ideas, or in which technical knowledge is required, there is a sprinkling of foreigners; and standing half way, as it were, between the European and the Egyptians, are a number of Syrian Christians, who have been educated in the French schools of their native province and who have come to make their fortunes in a country not yet overstocked with men of their type. The young Syrian is becoming, indeed, a common and rather conspicuous typical figure in this section of Cairo society. Clever, quick-witted, supple and persevering, possessing boundless self-confidence, a showy superficial education, and an innate talent for intrigue, he pushes his way with an energy and success which excite the envy and jealousy of his timid, plodding, slow-witted rivals. When he succeeds in getting his little finger into one of the chinks of the official barrier, he quickly makes the aperture large enough to admit his whole body; and as soon as he has comfortably installed himself and established a vague moral superiority over the other occupants of the bureau, he strives to introduce a retinue of relatives, friends, and acquaintances of his own nationality, with a clannish loyalty that would rejoice the heart of the ultra patriotic Scotsman. Thus the lower regions of the Egyptian official world, hitherto in the exclusive possession of the natives, are now being invaded by a swarm of enterprising adventurers from Beirut, the Lebanon, and Aleppo. The invasion is looked upon by the native Mussulmans with the dignified, fatalistic apathy which the true Moslem so often displays regarding the mysterious vicissitudes of human affairs, and this passive attitude on their part will probably continue so long as their interests are not directly threatened; but the Copts whose special province is attacked and who are being gradually expropriated, are already seriously alarmed, and consequently feel a certain sympathy with the cry "Egypt for the Egyptians". This sympathy was freely expressed during the earlier phases of the recent troubles. So long as the national movement remained free from all tinge of Mussulman fanaticism and aimed at expelling foreign influence from the government and foreigners from the administration, it found not a few warm adherents among the Coptic clerks in the public offices, who were not only trammeled in their peculation by the Anglo-French control but also distanced in the race for promotion by their Syrian rivals.[5]

Though not necessarily sympathetic to the Syrians, the account provides an essentially correct analysis of their position. In the same year, the Dufferin report stated that the Egyptian language schools were entirely inadequate and that almost all official translators were Syrians who had attended superior schools in Lebanon.[6]

Lord Cromer's attitude toward the Syrian Christians did much to promote their careers in the administration. He discerned in them "strength and virility of character" and credited them with "the power of inductive reasoning"[7] which in his opinion the native Egyptians lacked completely. In fact, "the Syrian was godsend

5 Wallace, 143.
6 Dufferin, 65.
7 Quoted in Lutfi al-Sayyid, Afaf, 143.

to the British administrator".[8] Cromer believed that "from a moral, social, or intellectual point of view the Syrian stands on a distinctly high level. He is rarely corrupt ... He can do more than copy the European ... It may be said with truth, he is really civilized." Together with the Armenians, the Syrians seemed to him "the intellectual cream of the Near East".[9]

No wonder, then, that by 1905 30% of the high government posts were held by Syrians and Armenians, while only 28% were held by Egyptians, the remaining 42% going – not surprisingly – to the British.[10] In the preceding decade, the relative representation of the Egyptians in all the government administration had actually decreased:

Table 15: Government officials by origin[11]

	1896		1906	
Egyptian	8,444	(90%)	12,207	(86%)
British	286	(3%)	672	(5%)
Syrian "and other foreigners"	690	(7%)	1,252	(9%)
Total	9,420	(100%)	14,131	(100%)

Before World War I, educated Syrians constituted a strong and recognizable element in Egyptian government administration and in the press. Because of their ignorance of Arabic the Greeks, the Italians, and the other immigrants could not compete with the Syrians in these areas. When, however, the number of Egyptian high-school graduates increased toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Syrians' position was challenged. The burgeoning Egyptian intelligentsia began to aspire to the very positions and activities the Syrians had made their own. The press and the government administration became the first battlegrounds of the Egyptian nationalism whose banner the young Egyptian intelligentsia was raising. It would be too narrow an interpretation to assume that only professional self-interest made the rising Egyptian intelligentsia use nationalism as a means to eliminate those non-

8 Cromer, II, 216. Boyle, 58–61, shares Cromers opinion. He feels that the Syrian is "at once a valuable assistant to the English official and a dangerous guide. To a European possessing but a limited acquaintance of the affairs and people of Egypt, there is a constant temptation to make more and more use of the intelligent well-mannered subordinate, who grasps with ease the spirit of instructions, is not afraid to act on them ... Instances could be cited of Englishmen in this country who have yielded to this temptation and have so far fallen under the sway of an able Syrian secretary as to become, without in the least recognizing the fact themselves, little more than a pliant instrument in his hands. This danger is much greater in the case of the Syrian than in that of either the Copt or the Muslim."

9 Cromer, II, 218, 220.

10 Milner, 30.

11 Quraishi, 15.

Egyptians who stood in the way of their professional careers. But it is correct to say that nationalist aspirations mingled with career ambitions; that, in other words, the Egyptian intelligentsia first saw the enemy of the nation in that section of society which was of greatest social and professional concern to themselves. By their background and education, the Egyptian intelligentsia was concerned with the administration and the press rather than the economy or the military.

Professional competition with the Syrians soon acquired nationalist overtones. The Syrians, numerically much smaller then the Greeks or Italians, and economically weaker than for instance the French or Belgians, were nevertheless the first and most vehemently attacked target of developing Egyptian nationalism. It was, of course, only the educated Syrians who stood in the way of the Egyptian nationalist intelligentsia, but nationalist sentiment turned against all Syrians, whether intellectual or merchant and – more significantly, as we shall see – whether Christian or Muslim.

In fact, none of the Syrians participating at the time in Egypt's political and intellectual life came from the old established families or the more recently arriving merchant and entrepreneurial groups. Yet the Syrian intelligentsia would often speak in the name of all Syrians, though their relations with the established communities were minimal.

The social and ideological gap between the Syrian intelligentsia and the commercial bourgeoisie is well illustrated in the biographical works of Zaidan and Zakhura. In his *Tarajim mashahir ash-Sharq*, Zaidan gives among some hundred biographies twelve of Syrian immigrants. Despite his explicit belief in the importance of material success and economic activities, only one biography deals with a merchant, Salim Sidnawi; all others deal with members of the Syrian intelligentsia. No Kahil, no Fir'aun, Bulad, or Zananiri attracted his attention. Neither the career of Hanna al-Bahri nor that of Habib Sakakini Pasha he deemed worthy of inclusion in his work. In Zakhura's case we can observe a progressively increasing interest in the Syrians. The first volume of his *Mir'at al-'asr* ... appeared in 1897. Of 155 biographies only nine dealt with Syrians. In the second volume, appearing in 1916, already 73 of 246 biographies dealt with Syrians in Egypt. His last work, *as-Suriyun fi Misr*, published in 1927, contained, of course, only Syrian biographies; two hundred of them. The increasing preoccupation with the Syrians in Egypt reflects the alienation of the Syrian intelligentsia from the Egyptian cultural and political scene. In his latter works Zakhura included also many lives of Syrians in business, trade, real estate, etc. – though members of the intelligentsia still play a dominant role. While Zakhura includes the commercial bourgeoisie, it remains striking that the names of the old established families are – as in Zaidan's work – completely absent.

Similarly, we find only rarely the names of some of the better-known Syrian intellectuals in the membership lists of the various communal welfare organizations and clubs which became popular at the end of the century. What little education the Syrian communities in Egypt had to offer had been strictly religious, dispensed

by the religious orders or the patriarchal clergy. The educated youths from Syria had gone through a non-traditional education, developing in the process often an anti-religious or at least an anti-clerical bias. They struggled with new ideas in a changing society and tried to emancipate themselves from the narrow experience of minority life by promoting new ideologies and concepts of society. Leaving Syria meant leaving a narrow communal world behind. The established Syrian communities in Egypt were mainly engaged in the commercial life of the country and by and large benefited from the special status of a Christian minority with European connections. They could eye the new arrivals and their unsettling ideas only with suspicion and apprehension.[12]

Considering the diminutive size of the Syrian communities and comparing it with the intense activities of the Syrian journalists, it is evident that from the beginning they did not consider these communities as an exclusive or sufficient audience for their periodicals. The Syrian intellectuals would, on occasion, discuss the issue of the Syrian presence. But rarely would they address themselves in their writings to the Syrians alone – much less to any specific denominational group of them. Rather, their concerns were of a more general nature, going beyond the traditional religious loyalties and differentiations and addressing themselves to society as a whole.

It is therefore not totally surprising to find the first Christian Syrian intellectuals in Egypt among the disciples of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani. Among other Syrians,[13] the most active followers of al-Afghani were Salim an-Naqqash, who had arrived in Egypt in 1876, and Adib Ishaq, who followed him briefly after. Upon al-Afghani's initiative, they published two newspapers, *Misr* in 1877 and *at-Tijara* in 1878.[14] A few years later Adib Ishaq was to write, in a retrospective article about this period, that Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani discussed the philosophers, fought for liberty, and wanted to save the Egyptians from humiliation. Pan-Islam was not yet mentioned. Adib Ishaq professed to have been a follower of al-Afghani. But he also took credit for his own role in spreading al-Afghani's ideas: "Only after his friends published al-Afghani's essays did the latter become known."[15] Not only al-Afghani himself but also his Egyptian followers, such as 'Abdallah an-Nadim and Muhammad 'Abduh, used the newly created journals, and occasionally *al-Ahram*, to publish their views. Their attacks against the foreigners in Egypt and the demands for a constitutional

12 Reid, 58, muses about the fact that Farah Antun did not receive for his magazine letters-to-the-editor from Syrian merchants in Egypt. Reid considers this a potential failure of the magazine. It seems, however, doubtful that Antun wanted to address this group at all. Certainly the Syrian business bourgeoisie did not feel that Antun's magazine was representing their interests and thoughts.

13 Sa'id al-Bustani, Salim al-'Anhuri, Iskandar an-Nahhas, and Louis Sabunji are mentioned (Keddie, 85).

14 'Abduh n.d., 77.

15 Ishaq, 220 ff., "Fi Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani".

government published there soon led to the closure of the journals by the Khedive. A third journal, founded by Adib Ishaq, *Misr al-Fatat*, suffered the same fate.

The circle around Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani may have been heterogeneous in its background, but its members shared many of the same ideas: a sense of the East as a community vis-à-vis Europe,[16] loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, and a belief in constitutional government as the remedy for the decay of society. Attempts to defend the Egyptians against foreign control did not yet imply an exclusive Egyptian nationalist stance which would have made the participation of non-Egyptians intolerable.

Yet friction along nationalist and religious lines could be felt. In 1879, a group called *Misr al-Fatat* organized itself in Alexandria. It was a political group, which at one point submitted a reform program to the Khedive. Adib Ishaq, Salim an-Naqqash, 'Abdallah an-Nadim, and Niqula Tuma were members. Two Egyptians, Muhammad Amin and Mahmud Wasif, were vice-president and secretary. Ya'qub Sanu' was associated with the group and published its proceedings in his magazine, *Abu Naddara*. From late 1879, Adib Ishaq published the above mentioned journal called *Misr al-Fatat*. 'Abdallah an-Nadim, however, soon withdrew and founded, together with Muhammad Amin and Mahmud Wasif, a new organization called the Islamic Welfare Society.[17] The reason for the split was supposedly 'Abdallah an-Nadim's fear that the underground character of the organization was dangerous. But religious and nationalist reasons seemed to have played a role. By calling the new group an Islamic society, the Syrian Christians and Jews like Sanu' were obviously excluded. The impression that religious and nationalist sentiments were decisive in the split is confirmed by a later comment of Muhammad 'Abduh who claimed that "there was not one true Egyptian in it (*Misr al-Fatat*) and most of its members were young Jews".[18] For the time being these latent tensions, however, were overshadowed by other events. Tawfiq's ascension to the Khedivial throne, and the elimination of Sharif Pasha's cabinet, put the constitutional opposition on the defense. Under the premiership of Riyad Pasha, all of Adib Ishaq's journals were surpressed. He left for Paris, where he was subsidized by the supporters of Sharif Pasha to publish yet another opposition paper.[19]

Immediately after a new Sharif cabinet was formed in September 1881, under the pressure of the 'Urabists and elements of the former assembly, Adib Ishaq returned upon the invitation of his constitutionalist friends to Egypt. He was made director of the office for publication and translation in the ministry of education

16 See Ishaq, 200. In an essay "ash-Sharq" written in Paris in 1881, Adib Ishaq defined the East in imperialist terms: Europeans consider Easterners inferior and the rightful prey of the Europeans.

17 Landau, 101 ff.; Zaidan 1922, II, 95; Zaidan 196?, IV, 79; Gendzier 55–56; Hamza 1967, 83, errs when he gives 1875 as the founding date of Young Egypt.

18 Rida, I, 75.

19 Vatikiotis, 146.

and culture. Soon after, he also became secretary of the parliament. He resumed the publication of his journal *Misr*. But the political situation in Egypt deteriorated. Sharif Pasha had to resign in February 1882 and the more radical 'Urabists gained power. Adib Ishaq had hoped that *Misr* would become the official paper of the government. But apparently it was too moderate for the taste of the 'Urabists. 'Abdallah an-Nadim's *at-Ta'if* and Mustafa Thaqib's *al-Mufid* became the papers most closely identified with the 'Urabists. Disappointed, Adib Ishaq transferred his paper in February 1882 to his brother. With the resignation of Sharif Pasha, Adib Ishaq's own position became weaker. In March he was supposed to receive the title Bey. Apparently some people tried to prevent this through intrigue at the court. Adib Ishaq responded to this attempt with an emotional essay denouncing informers and hypocrites who pretend to be friends. Though he did not mention any names, this article meant an open break with his earlier friends.[20]

As the position of the 'Urabist government became more precarious – especially because of European pressure – its press became more hostile against foreigners in general and Syrians in particular. In April, *al-Mufid* demanded the dismissal of all Syrians in government employ.[21] The battle between the Syrian press and the 'Urabist press was joined. In June 1882, the last Syrian journal, *al-Mahrusa*, was closed by government order. Many Syrians went back to Beirut. *Al-Mufid* considered this the climax of Syrian ingratitude: "The owners of *al-Ahwal* (Salim and Bishara Taqla), *al-Mahrusa* (Salim an-Naqqash), and *Misr* (Adib Ishaq) came to us when their pockets were emptier than their hearts were of patriotism, to which they appealed while promoting their own interests. They called for patriotism and service of humanity as long as the situation was tranquil. When the situation changed they silenced their newspapers and returned to their country with full pockets. Wonderful are the friends who stay with us in happy times and forsake us when we are in trouble."[22] The embittered Adib Ishaq felt so strongly about this betrayal by the 'Urabists, as he saw it, that before finally leaving Alexandria he did not hesitate to collaborate with shaikh Hamza Fathallah in publishing *al-I'tidal*. The shaikh had been the paid mouthpiece of Taufiq and had stood for everything the constitutionalists had opposed. In Alexandria, now occupied by the British, he attacked the 'Urabists heavily. Even after the 'Urabists had been crushed by the British, Adib Ishaq criticized them bitterly in a *qasida* dedicated to Sharif Pasha, whom he continued to admire.[23]

The fate that befell Adib Ishaq was representative of that of the Syrian intelligentsia in Egypt at the time. In their publications they had tried to fend off European interference and to search for a new focus of loyalty and identity. The Ottoman Empire seemed to provide such a focus. In a vaguer form they discerned an

20 Ishaq, 240, "al-Jasusiya".
21 *al-Mufid*, April 13 and April 23, 1882; quoted in 'Abduh n.d., 123.
22 *al-Mufid*, June 22, 1882; quoted in Hamza 1954, II, 20.
23 Ishaq, 13.

"Eastern community", and occasionally even an Arab identity was mentioned.[24] But such new community could be established only through a constitutional government in a free society: *"la watan illa ma' al-hurriya."*[25] The publishers of *al-Ahram*, the oldest Syrian newspaper in Egypt, had never been as intimately involved as Adib Ishaq or Salim an-Naqqash in the politics of the 'Urabists or the Sharif Pasha group. But they, too, had steadfastly opposed foreign interference in Egypt and the tyrannical rule of Taufiq. This critical position earned Salim Taqla in 1880 the name "foreign intruder", *min ad-dukhala' al-ajnabiyin*, in court circles.[26]

The Syrian intelligentsia could easily identify with similar attitudes among Egyptian reformers and constitutionalists. Only in the last six months before the British occupation did the ideological tone become shriller. Constitutionalism, per se, became a lesser issue. The imminent threat of direct European interference made the developing Egyptian nationalists feeling more exclusive and gave them more than just a tinge of religious zeal. On both accounts, the Christian Syrians were disqualified as participants in the movement. Therefore, they could not be part of the radicalization of the 'Urabist movement and were quickly denounced as traitors.

The original collaboration of the Egyptian and Syrian intelligentsia, built on vague notions of secular Eastern community and constitutionalism, and focused on the opposition to Khedivial tyranny and foreign interference, had collapsed in the moment of crisis. Religious prejudices had remained strong and the new nationalist ideology crystallized, understandably, around an exclusive Egyptian identity.[27]

The British occupation of Egypt extinguished, for the time being, the nationalist movement. Tranquility was enforced upon the country and some degree of economic prosperity returned. Syrians soon resumed their immigration to Egypt. Trends that had been discernible in Isma'il's time became stronger than ever. The number of Syrians in government service became prodigious and the press was mainly in Syrian hands.

Journalism was still the main vehicle for the expression of any intellectual pursuit. The reading public in Egypt was much more numerous than in Syria. The press operated unhampered by government restrictions.[28] This situation attracted the

24 See, for instance, Adib Ishaq's articles "al-Umma wa'lwatan" and "ash-Sharq" in Ishaq, 100, 199; or later article discussing Ottoman unity in 1883, ibid., 371.

25 Ishaq, 453.

26 'Abduh n.d., 135–164. For an analysis of al-Ahram's position during this period see ibid., 100–116; 'Abduh 1964, 135–163; and Zolondek, 182–195.

27 In a letter to Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani Muhammad 'Abduh wrote in March 1883 that his former disciples had betrayed the cause of the Urabists. Rida, in the 1931 edition of 'Abduh's biography, II, 526 ff., leaves out the names. In the 1925/26 edition, II, 601, he had given the initials A(dib) I(shaq), S(alim an-) N(aqqash), S(a'id al-) B(ustani) and observed that he left out some harsh criticism by Muhammad 'Abduh; see also Keddie, 187.

28 Cromer did not necessarily believe in the right of freedom of expression for the "subject races", but he felt the people who wrote to be harmless and the ideas they voiced inconsequential.

Syrian intellectuals. In addition, toward the end of the century the 'Abdulhamidian censorship and oppression in Syria caused many politically aware Syrians to flee to Egypt. Among them for the first time were a number of educated Muslim Syrians. The leading position of the Syrians in journalism did not imply that they all displayed an identical attitude toward Egypt and its politics. *Al-Ahram* resumed publication soon after the establishment of the British occupation. For the next decade, it was a strong but lonely voice of opposition to the British. Its anti-British attitude was easily interpreted as a patriotic pro-Egyptian stand. But it should not be forgotten that an anti-British position was also in the interest of the French, the main supporters of Salim Taqla's journalistic activities. It would be difficult to ascertain to what degree *al-Ahram's* pro-Egyptian position was genuine or coincidental with its pro-French position. The journal frequently served as a platform for nationalist activists to express their ideas. From 1892, Mustafa Kamil not only published his articles in *al-Ahram*, but was soon provided with an office by Salim Taqla.[29] But, of course, Mustafa Kamil himself realized only later that French interests were not necessarily identical with those of the Egyptian nationalist.

The foundation of *al-Mu'ayyad* (1889), *al-Liwa'* (1900), and *al-Jarida* (1907) shows that the Egyptian nationalist movement did not feel its point of view adequately represented by *al-Ahram*. Rashid Rida conceded that *al-Ahram* had opposed the occupational rule, "but the Egyptians still felt the need for the publication of a newspaper that would express the feelings of the nation".[30] In 1912, the Egyptian newspaper *ash-Sha'b* commented that *al-Ahram* always represented French interests, but conceded that "of all the Christian newspapers it had the greatest interest in the welfare of the nationalists. At times, it was as strong in its criticism as the most radical of the nationalist press."[31]

The British cared little whether the motives of *al-Ahram* were patriotic or pro-French. They were stung by its consistent criticism and in 1888 financed another daily, *al-Muqattam*, with the specific purpose of representing the British point of view. Again, the owners and editors were Syrians. Though they shared much in common with the owners of *al-Ahram*, it is noteworthy that the people associated with the latter were, by and large, Greek Catholics educated in French, while the group around *al-Muqattam* consisted mainly of Greek Orthodox or Protestant converts who had attended the schools of the British and American missionaries. All were convinced of the need for a secular society shaped according to the European model. Their religious and educational background let them choose either the French or the British form of European society as the best example to follow.[32] With the appearance of *al-Muqattam*, Syrians in general were in greater danger than ever of being ostracized as collaborators of the British, hostile to the national cause.

29 'Abduh, *Tatawwur*, 148.
30 *al-Manar*, XVI (1913), 875.
31 Quoted in 'Abduh, *Tatawwur*, 131.
32 Zolondek, 188; 105–106.

Furthermore, government service and journalism were precisely the fields to which the new Egyptian intelligentsia, graduating from the local high schools and the school of law, aspired.[33] Professional competition with the Syrians in these areas was soon couched in the terminology of nationalist concern.[34] In 1890 Riyad Pasha, premier at the time, tried to introduce a law preventing Syrians from occupying government positions.[35] Even Cromer perceived the potential tension and conflict that could arise from the employment of Syrians in the administration:

> It is probable that the employment of Syrians did at one time more towards rendering the British regime unpopular amongst certain classes in Egypt than anything else. For the more intelligent Moslem, when he gradually woke up to what was going on around him, said to to himself: The Englishman I understand; I recognize his good qualities; he brings to bear on his work not only knowledge, but energy superior to my own; I do not like him but I am aware that he means well by me, and I see that he confers certain material benefits on me, which I am very willing to accept; but what of the Syrian? Am I not as good as he? If native agents be required, why should not my kinsmen be employed rather than this alien, who possesses neither the advantages of the European nor those of the true Egyptian.[36]

It is rather doubtful that the Egyptian was as appreciative of the British officials as Cromer alleges, but Cromer's assessment of the educated Egyptian's attitude toward the Syrian in the administration and press is basically a correct one.

Syrian journalists, too, observed the proliferation of their compatriots in the Egyptian government service with growing unease. Farah Antun maintained that the restrictions imposed by Riyad Pasha on the employment of Syrians in the civil service did not affect the majority of the Syrians, who were truly hard working people.[37] Jurji Zaidan was worried lest the security of government employ and fixed salary would undermine the self-reliance of the Syrian and his willingness to work hard – the very qualities that had distinguished the career of the immigrant in Egypt.[38] Underlying both their arguments was a concern with the high visibility of Syrians in government positions and the possible tensions this might create between them and the Egyptians.

In January 1893, a first student demonstration attacked the building of *al-Muqattam* for its pro-British policies. The students were led against the Syrians by the 19-year-old Mustafa Kamil. A convinced spokesman for Egyptian nationalism,

33 *al-Manar*, XI (1908), 230.

34 Steppat, 258.

35 The law was watered down by Cromer to exclude only those Syrians who had resided less than 15 years in Egypt (Cromer, II, 216). It is, however, doubtful that even this diluted version of the law was ever enforced (see footnote 18 above). Kurd 'Ali, I, 48, believes that the law was beneficial for the Syrians who were forced to go into trade, agriculture, and the professions, where they made much more money. Many Syrians, though, were in these economic sectors before and without this law.

36 Cromer, II, 216.

37 Antun, 7.

38 *al-Hilal*, I (1892/93), 274; VI (1897/98), 21.

he was committed to a national community of all Egyptians, Muslims and Copts, excluding all foreign immigrants. Though his nationalism was basically secular, he did not hesitate to use the appeal to Islam when he believed it to serve his cause. The Christian Syrians were vulnerable on both counts. Mustafa Kamil revived the term *dakhil* (pl. *dukhala'*), intruder. It was a xenophobic term par excellence and vague enough to enable different sectors of society to associate different immigrant groups with it. F. Steppat is of the opinion that Mustafa Kamil himself meant by this term the Syrians but occasionally also included the Armenians in it.[39] For the peasant the obvious "intruder" was the Greek money-lender in the village. For the urban artisan it could be the Italian craftsman. The Egyptian government employee perceived of the Armenian, English, or Syrian official as the "intruder", while in journalism the threatening "intruder" clearly was the educated Syrian.

In July 1895, Mustafa Kamil published an article in which he enumerated those elements harmful to the Egyptian cause. One of them was "the intruders who forget that one of the noblest characteristics and sublime qualities is gratitude and to behave accordingly toward this country".[40] Not all immigrants were meant, only the ungrateful ones. It is not evident at all that he meant specifically the Syrians here. After all, the article appeared in *al-Ahram*, and only half a year earlier Mustafa Kamil had written about Salim Taqla, the Syrian owner of *al-Ahram*, "that he is faithful in the service of the beloved fatherland and that dedicated and sincere people surrounded him".[41] But Mustafa Kamil hammered away at the theme of the *dukhala'*, and people in Egypt, especially the Syrians themselves, came to identify the term with the Syrians in the country. Mustafa Kamil explicitly denied this:

> They were furious and excited, claiming that I meant by *dukhala'* all the Syrians, and they began spreading discord and intrigues in order to create great conflict and disunity; but I speak of them today as loudly as I can and I say that Egypt has amongst the Syrians many friends and that the *dukhala'* are a known group which disavowed its homeland and came to Egypt to seek a livelihood. The Egyptians honored them and were good to them. But they returned charity with insult and kindness with evil and proclaimed their enmity to the fatherland and its people and opposed every Egyptian who demanded the rights of the country and upheld the honor of his people and fatherland.[42]

No Syrian group fitted this description better than the pro-British group around *al-Muqattam*, Mustafa Kamil's old foe. But Mustafa Kamil left the term *dukhala'* vague enough so that the Egyptian public opinion could easily associate the whole Syrian colony with it.

Anti-Syrian sentiment was widespread at the turn of the century and Mustafa Kamil struck a responsive chord in his rethoric about the "intruders". In December 1888, it came to a clash between Muslims and Christians in Tanta. The incident

39 Steppat, 260.
40 Quoted in 'Abduh 1964, 273.
41 Ibid., 272.
42 Speech given June 3, 1897, quoted in Kamil, VI, 28.

clearly had a religious character but there was the added factor that Christians from Syria were prominently involved.[43] In the 1890's a "Patriotic Society" came into being, apparently with the aim of ousting Syrians from government positions.[44] Religious and professional tensions were intensified by political controversy.

Mustafa Kamil, educated in the law school and son of an engineer, was typical of the newly rising Egyptian intelligentsia. His newspaper *al-Liwa'* and his party *al-Hizb al-watani* provided this group with a political focus and program. Their demand for the national independence of Egypt also involved their right to use their education and training to take over the government administration and to run it free of British tutelage and without non-Egyptian officials, who were occupying positions the educated Egyptian felt qualified to hold. The emotional and ill-defined term *dukhala'* provided Mustafa Kamil and his followers with a nationalistic rationalization for their professional competition with the Syrian intelligentsia.

While Mustafa Kamil's *al-Hizb al-watani* attracted mainly those Egyptians whose social status had been determined first and foremost by their education and professions, the members of its rival organization in the national movement, *Hizb al-Umma*, came mainly from a landowning background. Though there were Syrian landowners, they were too few to pose a threat to the Egyptian landowner. The Syrian *sarraf* in the countryside played into the hands of the landowners by lending the peasant the money he needed. The *Umma* party had no particular ax to grind with the Syrians, but even the sober and mild-tempered Ahmad Lutfi as-Sayyid, leader of the *Umma* party, felt it necessary to admonish the Syrians, who had stayed for so long in Egypt, to integrate with society and to become loyal citizens.[45]

The socio-political position of the Syrian minority was indeed precarious. Though less than half a percent of the total population, they were highly visible in the press, the administration, the professions and, to a degree, in business. Always suspected of collaboration with the occupational regime, they could not take much consolation in Mustafa Kamil's statement that some of his best friends were Syrians. Frequently their religious background compounded their image as outsiders. The Syrians were conscious of the difficulty of their position and their attitudes toward the problem varied considerably.

An extreme position was taken by Faris Nimr, owner of *al-Muqattam* and main target of Mustafa Kamil's hostility. He identified squarely with his British patrons[46] and made no secret of his despite for anything Egyptian. To his shocked Syrian compatriot Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, he explained in 1908: "The lowliest British ser-

43 Khuri, 266.
44 Landau, 106–107.
45 Lutfi as-Sayyid 1937, 170 and 1962, 137.
46 He was married to the daughter of a British consul.

geant is higher than the most exalted Egyptian."[47] Two years later he felt forced to revise his own position in Egypt:

> How I regret now that I have tied myself down to Egypt. I have invested every penny I have in it, and my children know nothing above it. I was carried away by the wonderful work done in Egypt by Lord Cromer and his men. I believed that that state of things would continue and that England would never allow anything of what we see these days. It was a great mistake on my part. I feel now very anxious for the future of my children, as the Egypt of today is the last place I would choose for them to live in.[48]

In 1909, the Young Egyptian Party was founded. The party prostrated itself before the British: "Egypt has no need for a revolution because she has no oppressor, but she requires evolution because she has a guardian." Of all people, the Greek Catholic Najib 'Azuri from Jerusalem was made the party's foreign secretary.[49] Najib 'Azuri had earlier published an initial proposal for an independent Arab Empire which definitely excluded Egypt. This kind of political participation could only make the Syrians more suspect in the eyes of the Egyptian nationalist. A year earlier the National Free Party had been founded. As blatantly pro-British as the Young Egyptian Party, it apparently counted some of the people associated with *al-Muqattam* as its supporters. The party created much animosity in nationalist circles and disintegrated quickly.[50] On the whole, however, Syrians felt much more sympathetically inclined toward Egypt, and certainly were much less outspoken. The widely read Syrian magazines such as *al-Hilal* and *al-Muqtataf* made a conscious effort to stay out of Egyptian politics.

It remains remarkable how little Syrian intellectuals wrote concerning the sensitive issue of Syrians in Egypt. Apparently, prudence advised them to stir up as little controversy as possible. If indeed articles by Syrians on the topic appeared, they were usually somewhat apologetic, pointing out the positive role the Syrian played in Egypt, his harmonious collaboration within society, and his contribution to economic development. Beyond that, the Syrians tried to adhere to loyalties and identities which would bind them together with the Egyptians. Ottomanism, Arabism and Islam served this purpose in different ways. Almost all Syrian intellectuals confessed loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. So did many Egyptian nationalists. It was one of the policies which brought *al-Ahram* and Mustafa Kamil together. Faris Nimr and his friend Ya'qub Sarruf, too, supported adherence to the Ottoman Empire – without, however, missing an occasion to point out that British policies had always been beneficial for the Ottoman Empire.[51]

47 Kurd 'Ali, III, 845.

48 Quoted in Tignor 1966, 275. In 1906 Nimr had bought together with Y. Sarruf 781 faddan of land (Barakat, 205).

49 Alexander, 277–281. As there seems to be no other source, it may be doubted whether the party existed.

50 Landau, 142.

51 For a detailed discussion of the position of *al-Ahram* and *al-Muqattam* toward the Ottoman Empire see S'lim, 79–82.

The existence of the Ottoman Empire was central to the thought of Jurji Zaidan, owner of *al-Hilal*. He was convinced that only within the framework of the Empire would all groups and peoples be able to flourish. Only the Empire prevented the direct occupation of the area by European powers. Zaidan was keenly aware of the religious tensions among various groups. But he tried to play them down or to avoid them in his writings whenever he could. Constitutional government seemed to him to guarantee the coherence and harmony of the various national and religious groups in the Empire. After the Young Turk Revolution, he became one of the most outspoken supporters of the new regime among the Syrians in Egypt, in spite of his own inclinations toward Arab cultural nationalism.[52]

To Zaidan's compatriot, colleague and frequent opponent, Rashid Rida, loyalty to the Ottoman Empire was also of primary importance. The basis of this loyalty was, however, incompatible with Zaidan's position. For Rashid Rida, loyalty to the Ottoman Empire meant loyalty to the Caliphate, Islam being the bond that kept the Empire together. It was only after the Young Turk Revolution, when he saw secularization threatening the Islamic character of the Ottoman Empire, that Rashid Rida turned to the Arabs as the Islamic community par excellence, and with this notion began – probably unintentionally – to promote also territorial definitions of society and state.

But being Ottoman subjects had become somewhat irrelevant for the Egyptians under British rule. While for the Syrians membership in the Ottoman Empire constituted the only legal basis for their living in Egypt, a pro-Ottoman attitude meant only an additional political option for Mustafa Kamil's Egyptian nationalism. Nationalists like Ahmad Lutfi as-Sayyid rejected the Ottoman tie completely. Common citizenship in the Ottoman Empire did not ease the strained relations between the Syrians and the local population. Better justification for the place of the Syrians in Egypt had to be found.

An Arab identity, a community of history, culture and language shared by Syrians and Egyptians, seemed a possible answer. Adib Ishaq had occasionally pointed to such an identity. Jurji Zaidan had fervently promoted the concept of an Arab national entity – at least in its cultural expression – since his earliest writings. In his eyes, common heritage and geographic proximity made the Syrians and Egyptians really one nation. Beyond that, he saw the two peoples in a functional and complementary relationship. Egypt had always been a country of immigration; Syrians had always tended to emigrate from their homeland. Throughout history, Syrians had been middlemen, be it in trade or in the spread of culture, a task they were again fulfilling in the Egypt of his time.[53] The image projected was that of Egypt as a potentially rich country where Syrian skills and enterprise had greatly contributed

52 For a discussion of his thought see Philipp 1973. Farah Antun falls into the same category of Syrians in Egypt who rejected political Arab nationalism in order to keep the Ottoman Empire from disintegrating (Reid, 103).

53 *al-Hilal*, VI (1897/98), 20–26.

to develop this wealth. Syrians were grateful for Egyptian hospitality but Egyptians should also be aware of the great contributions of the Syrians.[54] In spite of this neat justification of the Syrian's role in Egypt, Zaidan's own uneasiness was not assuaged: "In modern times there are some people who consider immigrants Egyptians if they belong to the state religion, but not Christians or Jews. This conclusion is strange and does not fit the principles of civilization, since it is clear that nationalism (*wataniya*) and religion are two different things."[55]

Na'um Shuqair, historian and intelligence officer in the British army in the Sudan, perceived the same geographical and functional closeness between Egypt and Syria and traced it back to the biblical Joseph, from whose time the Syrians settling in Egypt "dedicated themselves to the service of Egypt, and distinguished themselves by their intelligence, knowledge, and administrative capabilities." The present-day Jews in Egypt constituted for Shuqair, even if indirectly, part of the Syrian migration to Egypt.[56]

Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, a Muslim from Damascus, shared many of Zaidan's opinions concerning the "naturalness" of the Syrian immigration to Egypt, the beneficial contributions of the Syrians, and the national community of all Arabs in Syria and Egypt. When he came to Egypt, he joined Muhammad 'Abduh's circle and his nationalism displayed a strong Islamic touch. He was appalled by a young Muslim Syrian who had approached him with the suggestion of founding a Muslim Syrian society in Egypt. He felt there was no need for such a society, since (Muslim) Syrians had close contacts with (Muslim) Egyptians and because they really were one people bound together by their geographic proximity, their language, and Islam.[57] The very fact, however, that Muslim Syrians desired to organize their own society indicates that relations with the Egyptians were not quite as smooth as Muhammad Kurd 'Ali liked to think. He blamed the Christian Syrians for their aloofness from Egyptian society. They founded various clubs which they called Syrian and which were not joined by a single Egyptian. They had lived in Egypt for a generation, founded families, become rich and yet had never met an Egyptian.[58] Considering the Islamic tenor of his nationalism, it is difficult to see how Muhammad Kurd 'Ali could have fitted the Syrian Christians into the national society.

Surprisingly enough, it was left to Rashid Rida, a Syrian with much profounder loyalties to Islam than Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, to point out that all was not well with the Syrians' position in Egypt, regardless of whether they were Muslims or Christians. It is difficult to determine when exactly Rashid Rida developed an interest in the Syrians as a people separate from others. It was a notion that ran counter to his

54 *al-Hilal*, I (1892/93), 281; VI (1897/98), 24–26.

55 *al-Hilal*, XIII (1904/05), 351.

56 Shuqair 1916, 756.

57 Kurd 'Ali, I, 46–49 and idem: *al-Qadim wa 'l-hadith*, Cairo, 1925, 262.

58 Kurd 'Ali, I, 46–47. He indicates an interesting social detail when he says that the Christian Syrians would bring their wives to the clubs, something the Egyptians found objectionable.

concept of a Muslim *umma* and to his claim that local patriotism, *wataniya*, was a divisive force. Already in 1900 he ran an article in *al-Manar* on a meeting of Syrians in New York where they discussed religious tolerance and Syrian unity. Rashid Rida could obviously report with a certain relish that this meeting had evicted some Maronite clergymen. But he went beyond simple *Schadenfreude*: "Dispute arose between various factions but, thank Heaven, those were not denominational factions. All the communities were united like one man. The factions were factions of different views and tendencies, in which civilization and science overcame indifference and ignorance." He went on to praise this development because religious rift had become harmful to the prosperity of the Syrian community in New York.[59] A year later Rashid Rida published a similar report on how patriotism, *wataniya*, overcame religious fanaticism, *ta'assub dini*, and led to harmonious cooperation between Muslim and Christian Syrians in Brazil.[60] Clearly, these reports had their relevance for the Syrian colony in Egypt.

Rashid Rida felt animosity already directed against him in 1904 when Ibrahim al-Muwailihi attacked him in *al-Mu'ayyad*, using the cliché accusations against Syrians: Rashid Rida had come poor to Egypt and, after making a fortune there, turned to denigrating the Egyptians.[61] But it was the animosity toward Mustafa Kamil which made Rashid Rida so sensitive to attacks against the Syrians. The hostility between the two originated in the clash between the Khedive and Muhammad 'Abduh, the respective allies and patrons of Mustafa Kamil and Rashid Rida. The latter also did not think much of Mustafa Kamil's Islamic pretensions but saw him instead as a divisive nationalist. In 1907, he took issue first with Mustafa Kamil's, then with Muhammad Farid's accusations and attacks against the Syrians. In his eyes it was their nationalist attitude that had led to the hostility against the Syrians. He took exception to the claim that only the people around *al-Muqattam* were meant by the term *dukhala'*. According to him, anti-Syrian sentiments were widespread, even among educated people, and certainly not restricted to Christian Syrians as their target. With some exasperation, he reported the conversation between an Egyptian and a shaikh from al-Azhar. The Egyptian praised the mosque of *as-Sitt ash-shamiya* which had been built and financed by Syrians. Its maintenance and cleanliness were laudable. To this praise the shaikh replied: "It's only a pity that they stuffed the mosque with Syrians."[62] Embittered, Rashid Rida rejected the allegation of *al-Liwa'* that coming from Syria implied treacherous character and

59 *al-Manar*, III (1900), 33.
60 *al-Manar*, V (1902), 555.
61 *al-Manar*, X (1907), 461.
62 *al-Manar*, X (1907), 537–538. I am indebted to Miss M. Booth for pointing out to me this story. No further information about the mosque is available to me. Mubarak, V, 15, has only a *Jami' as-Sitt Salima al Halabiya* which was built by her relatives in Suq al-Khashab near Bab al-Bahr. No date for its construction is given. It remains uncertain whether Rashid Rida meant this mosque.

"vileness of origin".[63] In reaction he began to defend all Syrians, Muslims as well as Christians: "The Syrian assimilates more than others to his new homeland and serves it better in sciences, literature and politics – just as he would in his own land."[64] If the journals of Christian Syrians were so successful, it was simply because they were better than the Egyptian ones. After all, Muslim Egyptians constituted the large majority of the readers of these journals. Of himself, Rashid Rida said in selfdefense: "I am dedicating my whole life to advise the Egyptians and to serve them."[65]

But it was evident that in spite of such claims, apologetics, and justifications, the position of the Syrians in Egypt remained a precarious one. Their self-proclaimed usefulness and beneficial impact upon Egyptian society and economy remained doubtful in the eyes of the Egyptians, to say the least. Neither Ottoman loyalty nor even Islam assured full acceptance of the Syrian into Egyptian society. At a time when Egyptian nationalism developed into a full-fledged autonomous ideology trying to deal with the specific problems of Egypt under British occupation, an appeal to a common Arab identity could not make the Syrians more acceptable to the Egyptians. Syrians who had arrived during the last two decades of the nineteenth century had to realize that they would remain marginal and barely tolerated in Egyptian national politics. As emigrants in a foreign surrounding, they had, indeed, been made aware of their "Syrianness". In the last years of the 'Abdulhamidian regime, Syrians came to Egypt who had been politically aware and active in Syria and had, therefore, to flee. They had little interest in Egyptian politics but were more concerned with the fate of Ottoman Syria.[66]

The Young Turk Revolution generated a new political interest and hope among all the Syrian intelligentsia in Egypt. Internal liberalization and reorganization seemed to give the Ottoman Empire a new lease on life. Syria, and in fact all the Arab provinces, were to have a greater voice in government. The Syrians in Egypt meant to have an active part in the new politics. Most of the Syrian press in Egypt was full of praise for the new regime. But the first organizational step already pointed toward a clash with the central government. In the initial enthusiasm for the constitutional government the suggestion was made in *al-Muqattam* that Lebanon should now give up its special status and be fully integrated into the Ottoman Empire. A group of Lebanese reacted in the spring of 1909 by founding *al-Ittihad al-lubnani* in Cairo and Alexandria, a society which made its aim the preservation of the *mutasarrifiya* and eventually full Lebanese independence. The members were

63 *al-Manar*, XVI (1913), 317.

64 *al-Manar*, XVI (1913), 875.

65 *al-Manar*, X (1907), 458.

66 Sauda, I, 15. The author, who came to Egypt in 1906, had great admiration for the nationalism of Mustafa Kamil. He was apparently unruffled by the latter's attacks on the Syrians. "Syrians in Egypt" were not a relevant issue for Sauda, who promoted the idea of an independent Lebanon while the nationalist fervor of Mustafa Kamil inspired him.

almost exclusively Maronites. A few were Greek Catholic. Noteworthy was the connection with *al-Ahram*: Dawud Barakat, its chief editor, and Jibra'il Taqla, son of its founder, were members.[67]

During World War I, the policy of *al-Ittihad al-lubnani* was already directed toward complete independence of Lebanon. When Iskandar 'Ammun accepted an ambassadorship to Washington from Sharif Husain in 1917, he was forced to resign from *al-Ittihad al-lubnani* because there were fears that his acceptance of the position would imply the integration of Lebanon into a general Arab state after the war. 'Ammun claimed, though, to have obtained from Sharif Husain an agreement for complete independence for Lebanon.[68] The society also resisted any attempt to incorporate Lebanon into any Greater Syria scheme.[69] But in 1908 such particularist tendencies were not yet popular. Yusuf as-Sauda, the secretary of the *Ittihad's* section in Alexandria, himself admits that at the eve of World War I the organization had lost much of its momentum.[70]

More typical was the spirit of a reception given in November 1910 in Cairo for Sulaiman al-Bustani by his friends. Two years earlier he had been elected representative of Beirut to the Ottoman parliament. Muslims, as well as Christians, attended. Rashid Rida, Rafiq al-'Azm, Ya'qub Sarruf, Sulaiman al-Bustani, and Khalil Mutran gave speeches. Religious differences were not mentioned at all. The discussion centered on the cooperation between Arabs and Turks. The new constitution filled everybody with hope. But future difficulties could already be sensed. Rafiq al-'Azm and others were of the opinion that considerable tension between the two peoples existed.[71]

Arab disenchantment with Young Turk policies set in quickly. Arab aspirations collided with the increasingly centralistic and Turkish-oriented policies of the Young Turks. This is not the place to discuss the beginnings of the organized Arab national movement. Suffice it to say that since shortly after the Young Turk Revolution a variety of Arab clubs and societies flourished in the Ottoman Empire and abroad. Gradually their political program crystallized, and their opposition to Young Turk policies became more pronounced.[72]

The single most important event that seems to have jolted the Syrians in Egypt into political action and organization was the war against the Italians in neighboring

67 Sauda, I, 25–26, lists the following members: (A) Cairo: Iskander 'Ammun, president; Antun al-Jumayyil, secretary general; Haidar Ma'luf, treasurer; Jibra'il Taqla, Dawud Barakat, Habib Ghanim, Jirjis Hanna, Salim Bu 'Izz ad-Din, Muhammad Talhuq, Khalil Abi 'l-Lam', Bulus Mas'ad, Habib Yazbak, Salim al-Bustani, Sami al-Juraidini. (B) Alexandria: Habib Antunyus, president; Yusuf as-Sauda, secretary; Dimitri Saba, Habib al-Musaffa, Habib al-Ma'ushi, Jurji Shaikhani, Iskandar Shukri, Butrus Lahud.

68 Sauda, I, 91.

69 *Ibid.*, 68–70, 90.

70 *Ibid.*, 68.

71 *al-Manar*, XIII (1910), 785.

72 For a discussion of these groups see 'Ammara, 304–345; Hartmann.

Tripoli. The Young Turks showed themselves incapable of defending an Ottoman Arab province, while the local population under Sanusi leadership offered dogged resistance to the Italian invaders.[73] In December 1912, *Hizb al-lamarkaziya al-'uthmani* was founded in Cairo. The party's program centered on the decentralization of governmental authority and greater autonomy of provincial governments in finances, education, and even military affairs. The use of the local languages in education and administration was a major point.[74] Though theoretically the Decentralization Party was concerned with and open to all ethnic groups with a territorial basis in the Ottoman Empire, it was, in fact, restricted to the Arabs and, to be more precise, to the affairs of Syria.[75] Its founders were Rashid Rida and Rafiq al-'Azm.[76] Its members were exclusively Syrian. Some had only recently arrived in Egypt, while others had lived in Egypt for many years. None belonged to the older and established families in Egypt.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature was that the membership consisted of Christian as well as Muslim Syrians.[77] It was indeed the first time that Syrians in Egypt formed an organization on the basis of their common origin regardless of their religious affiliation. Through membership in this party, different Syrian groups in Egypt were brought together. Dawud Barakat provided the link to *al-Ahram*. The vice-president of the Cairo chapter, Iskandar 'Ammun, was also the president of *al-Ittihad al-lubnani*, with its pronounced separatist tendencies. The political consensus of the party was still limited and precarious. Rashid Rida himself commented later: "I am not saying that all the members of the party shared our opinion (i.e. that the secession from the Ottoman Empire would hurt the Arabs more than the Turks), but they all agreed that the decentralized form of government was the best for our country and others."[78] Most likely, Rashid Rida was referring to *al-Ittihad al-lubnani* with this comment. The party program was vague enough to accommodate different opinions without evoking an open clash. Decentralization was accepted as

73 Barru, 369 ff.

74 *al-Manar*, XVI (1913), 226–231.

75 For a criticism of its Syrian separatist character see the comments of 'Abd al-Masih al-Antaki, whose pan-Arab orientation prevented him from joining the party (Zakhura 1916, III, 60).

76 According to Rashid Rida the two had met 1898 in Egypt and founded shortly afterwards *Jam'iyat ash-shura al-'uthmaniya*. Turks, Circassians, and Armenians joined this group. An attempt by the Committee of Union and Progress to absorb the group was refused: "Your group is Turkish, ours is Ottoman. We have nothing in common with you except the opposition to tyranny and oppression and the effort to create a constitutional representative government." The group disintegrated later and Rafiq al-'Azm and his brother Haqqi joined for a short while the CUP ('Azm, see the introduction written by Rashid Rida).

77 Barru, 434, lists the following members: Rafiq al-'Azm, president; Rashid Rida, cofounder; Iskandar 'Ammun, vicepresident; Shibli Shumayyil; Sami Juraidini, Haqqi al-'Azm, vicesecretary. 'Izzat al-Jundi; Nu'man Abu Sha'r, Dawud Barakat were on the finance committee. Hartmann does not name all of these but mentions in addition 'Abd al-Hamid az-Zahrawi, Salim 'Abd al-Hadi, and 'Ali an-Nashashibi. See also *La Vérité*, 58.

78 'Azm, introduction.

a principle. But apparently in what kind of provincial borders local autonomy should be established was never discussed. Presumably the traditional *vilayet* boundaries were to remain.[79] Though decentralization was its program and Arabism was its ideological orientation, the party remained almost exclusively Syrian in membership and committment.

The establishment of the Decentralization Party in Egypt made the split between the Syrian intelligentsia and its Egyptian counterpart final. When the first Arab Congress, organized by the Decentralization Party, met in Paris in 1913, an Egyptian inquired as to his status in the Congress. He was told that his position could only be that of an observer, not that of a participant.[80]

In 1916, during World War I, Na'um Shuqair, anticipating the establishment of an independent Syria after the war, discussed the future of the Syrian in Egypt. In a touching poem he described his ambiguous feelings, torn between loyalty to the new homeland and longing for the land of origin. Egypt had been good to the Syrian immigrant, but on balance Shuqair seemed to believe that there was no future for the Syrian in Egypt. The Syrian would never assimilate into Egyptian society and would thus be condemned to a permanent minority status, while in Syria Jews, Christians and Muslims could build a new and free society on the basis of their common semitic heritage.[81]

The break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Mandate states in the area of Greater Syria on the one hand, and the intense Egyptian struggle for independence on the other, severed any remaining ties between the Egyptian and Syrian intelligentsia. The latter became even more preoccupied with the fate of Syria, Lebanon and the Palestine mandate, and at least some of the educated Syrians, such as Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, George Antonius, Iskandar 'Ammun, to mention only a few of the better-known names, remigrated from Egypt. The formal existence of a Lebanese and Syrian state stamped the Syrians even more as outsiders in Egypt than they had been as Ottoman subjects. With the elimination of the Ottoman link and the continued presence of British power in Egypt, the Egyptian nationalist struggle focused exclusively on Egypt herself. Though Egyptian independence after 1922 was mainly nominal, the Egyptian intelligentsia achieved much greater control over the administration and the press. The remaining Syrian intelligentsia waned and ceased to be a serious challenge.

79 *Al-Mu'tamar al-'arabi al-awwal*, 113.
80 Ibid., 115.
81 Shuqair 1916, 771–772.

CHAPTER 5

THE SYRIAN COMMERCIAL BOURGEOISIE IN EGYPT: SUCCESSFUL RESISTANCE TO INTEGRATION

A. THE FORMATION OF THE NEW COMMERCIAL BOURGEOISIE

The Syrian intelligentsia had first attempted to make the Egyptian nationalist cause its own. Then the majority had argued the case of an Arab cultural entity within the framework of a constitutionalist Ottoman Empire. This would have provided them with a legitimate place in Egyptian society. Confronted by a strong reaction against them by the Egyptian nationalist movement and having to face eventually the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, many Syrians turned to an Arab nationalism centered around Syria while others committed themselves to a particularist Lebanese nationalism. A few of the intellectuals continued to opt for integration into Egyptian society, but usually at the cost of foregoing any active political participation. Though the ultimate political goal of the Syrian intelligentsia shifted with the changing political conditions and options, they had remained consistent in their attempt to dissolve sectarian boundaries and loyalties for the sake of a more comprehensive secular national identity. These Syrians had been profoundly influenced in their thinking by their experience of Europe, and their admiration for it was often as unabashed as it was innocent. Yet they did not intend to become Europeans but proposed to integrate all that they admired in European society into Arab civilization, in whose viability they passionately believed. Their literary and journalistic efforts contributed greatly to the Arab cultural revival and the development of Arab nationalism. Ironically, their impact was perhaps least felt in their own immigrant communities in Egypt, whose development followed a path very different from that proposed by the intelligentsia.[1]

To be sure, secularization came to play a decisive role in the communities but it was accompanied, as we shall see, by a deliberate attempt to preserve the communal identity and structure and by a tendency to increasingly replace the Arab cultural heritage with European culture, especially French culture and language.

With immigration, the number of Syrians in Egypt grew six-fold between the middle of the nineteenth century and World War I, reaching almost 35,000 in 1917.[2] Not only did the Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Maronite, and other commu-

1 See for instance Reid, 58, reflecting on the fact that Farah Antun's magazine had no particular appeal to the commercial bourgeoisie of his own Greek Orthodox community.

2 *Census of Egypt 1917*, 482, does not make it clear whether the category "Syrians" included Muslims or not. Their number in any case was small.

nities of Alexandria and Cairo grow in size, but additional communities established themselves in Tanta, Mansura, Zagazig, Port Said, and eventually Khartoum. The sheer number of immigrants was a source of strength for these communities. In trying to adapt to the new social environment and to establish an economic basis for themselves, the immigrants would frequently look to their coreligionists for help. This attitude in turn helped strengthen communal ties and loyalties.

While immigration increased the numerical and structural strength of the communities, Egyptian economic developments brought prosperity to them. Many of the Syrian immigrants turned to trade as the most promising avenue to economic success. Syrians were to be found in the local retail trade as well as in the international commerce of Egypt. In contrast to their counterparts of the eighteenth century, these Syrian merchants never established a controlling position for themselves in the Egyptian economy. The customs administration had come firmly under the control of the government. The volume of foreign trade had risen dramatically during the nineteenth century, but so did the participation of Europeans and other minorities, with whom the Syrians now had to compete. The Egyptian Directory for 1905 provides the following picture:

Table 16: Ethnic background of the top 200 merchants and "qumisiyunjis" (percentages)[3]

	Alexandria	Cairo
Syrians	10	8
Jews	11.5	12
Armenians	2.5	2
Greeks	16	10
other Europeans	47.5	48
unidentified	12.5	20
total	100	100

Relative to their total numbers in the Egyptian population, the Syrians were heavily overrepresented in commerce, though not quite as strongly as in the Egyptian press. In very few branches of trade the Syrians seem to have had a certain predominance – e.g. in Cairo's skin trade 5 out of 9 merchants were Syrian,[4] while of the 33 moneychangers in Cairo at least 20 were Jewish, and only 3, possibly 4, were Syrian. All 6 coffee traders mentioned are Greek. Similarly, the geographic distribution does not show the exclusive presence of one or another minority in any particular area. While we can observe that there were hardly any Syrians found in Upper Egypt, they always shared positions in trade and professions in the cities of lower Egypt with other groups such as the Greeks, the Jews, Europeans and a number of Egyptians. On the whole, the Greeks were much more strongly represented in the

3 *Dalil*, 172–276, 215, 219. Very few names in the unidentified category are Arabic.
4 *Dalil*, 182.

provincial towns of Egypt than the Syrians. Only in Tanta and Mansura did the Syrians reach, in some branches of trade and the professions, a representation comparable to the one they had in Alexandria and Cairo.

Neither the geographical nor the occupational spread of the various minorities permits us to speak of an ethnic division of labor. But ethnicity still played a role in the nineteenth century insofar as individuals would overwhelmingly prefer to do business with other members of their own family or at least with members of their own community. A perusal of inheritance cases listed in the church records shows that most often claims of business debts against the inheritors came from these groups.

One distinct pattern among Syrian merchants, however, deserves our particular attention. Almost all the Christian Syrian merchants – but none of their Muslim compatriots – were involved in the Egyptian-European trade. The by-now diminished trade with Syria, on the other hand, was attracting almost exclusively Muslim Syrians, whose major motive for migration had indeed been this particular trade.[5] In the Sudanese trade, Muslim merchants from Egypt, the Maghrib, the Hijaz and Syria participated as well as Copts and Christian Syrians, with the number of Muslim and Christian Syrians being almost equal.[6]

The trade with Europe was clearly by this time the most important and profitable one. The Christian Syrians had long experience in it and had established contacts with European merchants. They had consolidated their position in the second half of the century when a number of them travelled to Europe and opened their own business there or at least established firm contacts with European merchants.[7] The Muslim Syrians enjoyed none of these advantages. Even the most important among them, 'Abdallah al-Kahhal, who had excellent political contacts with the

5 Shuqair 1916, 756. Id., 754, provides the following lists (vocalization of names partly uncertain; punctuation between names follows the Arabic edition):

1. Merchants dealing in Syrian grain, nuts, fruits, oil etc.:
   Alexandria: Jubaili, Qana'a, Mustafa Khamadh, Muhammad Baha' ad-Din Maknasi, 'Abd ar-Rahman Summaqiya, Samman, 'Abd al-Karim Mudawwar, Habib and Ilyas Zayyat, Hibri, 'Afra.
   Cairo: Hajj 'Abdallah al-Kahhal, Sayyid Bakri ar-Raffa, Ahmad Bey Tawakkul, Rashid al-Maha'iri.
2. Merchants dealing in Syrian textiles, sashes, kerchiefs, ropes, etc.:
   Muhammad Taufiq Jabri, Sayyid Muhammad as-Sayyid Nizam, Sa'id and Muhammad Hamawi, 'Abd al-Ghani Salim Saliq, Khalil at-Takriti, Muhammad Bey Abu Nasr as-Sayyid, Husni.

Shuqair expressly states that all except Husni and the Zayyat brothers were Muslims.

6 A list of the most important Cairo-based merchants carrying on trade with the Sudan in the second half of the nineteenth century enumerates 9 Syrian Christians, 7 Muslim Syrians, 3 Maghribis, 6 Egyptians, 1 Jew, 3 unidentified (Shuqair 1908/1967, 184, 185).

7 To name but a few: As'ad Mufarraj (Zakhura 1927, 449); Salim Bustrus (Zaidan 1922, II, 145); Hananiya 'Ubaid (Shuqair 1916, 237); Amin Shumayyil (Zaidan 1922, II, 182).

British in Cairo and whose business agents were to be found in the Sudan, the Hijaz, and Tripolitania, never ventured directly into European trade.[8]

The Egypt-Syria trade had been, as we have seen, the original domain of the Syrian merchants. In the eighteenth century, Christians had pushed out the Muslim merchants and had used this trade as a basis for further expansion into Egypt's international trade. In the nineteenth century, a reversal of this development occurred when Syrian Christians moved out of this by-now much less important trade and left it once more to their Muslim compatriots.[9]

Throughout the nineteenth century, the trade between Egypt and the Sudan depended greatly upon the political relations between the two areas. Much more remote from European impact, the Sudan was, generally speaking, more accessible to Muslim than to non-Muslim merchants. It seems that Christian Syrians came to the Sudan – just like the Greeks[10] – in significant numbers only after the British reconquest in 1898. Nevertheless, the Greek Orthodox Mikha'il Lutfallah, like his Muslim compatriot 'Abdallah al-Kahhal, had already made his fortune in the Sudanese trade before and during the reign of Khedive Isma'il.

In conclusion, we can observe that at the turn of the century the Muslim Syrian merchants were not only numerically much less significant in the commerce of Egypt than their Christian compatriots, but were also concentrated in the comparatively less important "local" foreign trade with Syria and the Sudan, and practically excluded from trade with Europe.

In contrast with all other foreign minorities, Syrians very rarely possessed foreign citizenship, which would have enabled them to enjoy the commercial benefits of the capitulations and legal foreign protection. They were apparently keenly aware of this comparative disadvantage, since they went to great lengths to obtain positions in the service of the diplomatic corps in Egypt and thereby gain consular protection. In 1905, 12 of 16 positions as consular translators in Cairo and Alexandria were held by Syrians. Of 59 diplomatic appointments, 8 were held by Syrians – usually in the service of nations with little direct interest in Egypt such as Brazil, Denmark, Portugal, etc. In almost all other cases, diplomatic positions were held by nationals of the represented countries. Usually foreign protection was

8 Walz. 'Abdallah Kahhal (1840–1914) seems also to have used exclusively his coreligionists from Syria to expand his business operations in the Sudan.

9 The Greek Orthodox Karam family from Tripoli had started in Alexandria a business of lumber imports from Anatolia and Syria. At the eve of the World War I, most of their lumber was supplied from Scandinavia and Austria (Zakhura 1927, 36, 38). The Greek Catholic Sidnawi brothers never traded with Syria but initially received European merchandise via Istanbul. Their business began to succeed noticeably once they established direct trade contact with Europe (Zaidan 1922, I, 302).

10 The Greek community in Khartoum was wiped out when the conquering Mahdi forces killed 47 of the 54 Greeks living there. In 1902, four years after the British reconquest, there were again 135 Greeks living in Khartoum. By 1923 the estimated Greek population of the Sudan reached 3500–4000 (Politis I, 387, 390, 399).

granted to the employee only for the length of his office tenure, however, and in 1921 only 20 of 1200 Greek Catholic families living in Cairo had acquired foreign citizenship.[11]

Though they did not enjoy the privileged position of their compatriots a century earlier, and were forced into competition with other minorities and European merchants, the Syrians were still able to maintain a presence in the commerce of Egypt which was roughly thirty times greater than the proportion of their numerical size to the total population.

Since the 1860's a new Christian Syrian commercial bourgeoisie had begun to crystallize, emerging from three different social elements:

1. Some of the old merchant families which had established themselves in the eighteenth century, such as the Kahils, the Bulads, the Zananiris, and the Sakakinis, had survived and flourished again.

2. After the economic opening of Egypt in 1840, a number of merchants already established in Syria had expanded their activities and parts of their families emigrated to Egypt for business reasons. Habib Lutfallah, of a Greek Orthodox merchant family in Beirut, came to Egypt in 1845 and became especially successful in the Sudan trade. His family invested later in land and the cotton trade. The brothers George and Sam'an Karam came from Tripoli in 1848 to set up one of the largest lumber import businesses in Alexandria. The Dabbas', the Bustrus', and others had family business backing them before they ventured into the Egyptian market.

3. Finally, there were those who fit the "poor-boy-makes-good" story and who later provided Egyptian anti-Syrian sentiments with the image of the destitute Syrian immigrant who had enriched himself at the cost of the Egyptian yet always kept aloof from them. One of the striking cases was that of the Sidnawi brothers, Sam'an and Salim. They were Greek Catholics who had learned tailoring in Damascus and arrived in Cairo between 1877 and 1879. By the end of the century, they owned huge department stores in most of the cities of Lower Egypt. Khalil Sa'b, a Maronite from Ba'abda, arrived in Mansura in 1864, where he opened a little shop and operated as a money-lender on the side. From these humble beginnings, he expanded into large-scale land reclamation, founded a real estate company and established a cotton ginning plant. Knighted by the Pope, he became one of the leading figures in the Maronite community. The Greek Orthodox Jurji Qardahi, the Greek Catholic Farid Babazoghli, the Syrian Catholic Jirjis Barahimsha and many others had similar careers in Egypt where their business acumen propelled them form rags to riches and assured their families leadership roles in their respective communities.

By the late 1870's, this newly consolidated commercial bourgeiosie had grown enough in wealth and numbers to constitute a serious challenge to the control the clergy had over the communities.

11 *Taqarir al-hai'a an-niyabiya li-ta'ifat ar-Rum al-kathulikiyin 1918–1921*, 65–68 (Greek Catholic Archives, Cairo).

B. WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE SECULARIZATION OF COMMUNAL RULE

Clerical control over the Greek Catholic and the Maronite communities had been established in the 1830's when the Syrian merchants in Egypt were suffering from a serious decline in their fortunes. The authority of the church had been sanctioned by the Ottoman government in the 1840's when it gave these communities official recognition as legal *millets*.

The struggle for power between the clergy and lay members of the communities did not – at least initially – take the form of programmatic demands for representation, etc., but concentrated on efforts by the commercial class to establish welfare organizations and to control them. Between 1876 and 1881, communal welfare organizations sprang up everywhere. The first were established in Alexandria: in 1876 the Greek Orthodox Syrians founded a welfare society. This was followed a year later by the foundation of a Greek Catholic and a Maronite society. In Cairo, it was the Greek Catholics who initiated the first welfare society in 1880. In 1881 the Maronites followed suit. A first attempt by Syrians to found a Greek Orthodox welfare society was made in 1889. Later, additional societies were created in smaller towns and a variety of associations and committees were set up for purposes ranging from church decorations to vocational training for girls.

The first and decisive impetus for the foundation of such societies, however, occurred in the period 1876–1881 – crucial years in the history of modern Egypt, when, for the first time, demands for the creation of a constitutional and representative government were made. The political discussions of this period must also have left their imprint on the thinking of the founders of these welfare societies, even if they did not formulate their challenge to clerical power in a programmatic fashion.

The case of the Greek Catholic welfare society in Cairo may serve as a good example of the reasons that led to the establishment of these societies and the roles they assumed in the life of the communities. The immediate issue leading to the formation of the Greek Catholic welfare society was the question of providing for the poor of the community. Already by 1837, Maximos Mazlum had established a fund for the poor, decreeing that every merchant should give half a ghirsh to the fund on every 1000 ghirsh of merchandise he bought. Likewise, each salaried person was to give 1% of his salary to the fund.[12] But eight years later the patriarchal representative in Cairo, Kafuri, complained that there were no funds for the poor, and in an attempt to implement the regulations of 1837 he appointed a trustee for the poor fund, Habib Zananiri. In 1871 the management of the community was revamped by a decree of Patriarch Gregorius according to which each year a plenary assembly of the community should be held. This assembly was to elect four dignitaries of the community to assist the Patriarchal representative together with one member appointed by him in running communal affairs. These five trustees were

12 *'Id al-Khamsin*, 1.

called the Patriarchal Commission or the Communal Commission, *al-qumisyun al-milli*. They were responsible to the Patriarch or his representative, not to the community. One of the five was made *wakil al-fuqara'*, trustee *of* the poor, keeping the accounts of the poor fund and making distributions to the poor according to the decisions of the clergy. The general assembly met very rarely and was poorly attended,[13] with the result that all authority remained in the hands of the clergy.

Tensions between the community and the Patriarch began to develop in 1879, which can be sensed from the reports in which the priest Tuma Mazlum alluded to the rebellious mood of the community in Alexandria challenging the authority of the Patriarch. Most likely he was referring to the independent foundation of a welfare society there in 1877. The situation in Cairo had not yet reached this point, but Tuma Mazlum noted that even loyal members of the community such as the brothers Kassab, 'Abduh, Sakakini, Qustantin Kahil, Zananiri, and Butrus Kassab complained bitterly about the unwillingness of the Patriarch to provide for the poor. Tuma Mazlum defended the Patriarch but clearly also felt that the Patriarch had to take positive steps if he wanted to avoid an open rebellion.[14] Various meetings between Tuma Mazlum and the Communal Commission failed to settle the issues. In May 1879, he reported, the Commission demanded that the lands and buildings constituting the endowments of the poor, *awqaf al-fuqara'*, should be surrendered to their control, since they belonged to the poor of the community not to the church.[15] On May 29, the Commission held a meeting which Tuma Mazlum interpreted as an attempt "to monopolize all activities and proceedings according to their views and judgement regardless of the orders and laws issued by the Patriarch in 1866 and 1871".[16] Tuma Mazlum protested against this policy but the Commission was adamant, especially in its demand to gain control over the *waqf* of the poor.

The conflict between the Patriarch and the lay leadership of the community came into the open when, on April 18, 1880, 37 Greek Catholics – among them several members or ex-members of the Communal Commission – met at the office of Habib Sakakini and founded the Greek Catholic Welfare Organization. The list of founders reads like a social register of the community: five Zananiris, three Kahils, two Bulads, the Sidnawi brothers, a Susa, a Sakakini, an 'Airut, an 'Id, a Mishaqa, a Sabbagh, and others. The major reason given for the need to establish such an organization was the inability of the Patriarch to provide for the poor of the community.[17] An executive committee was elected, which by July submitted the draft of a constitution for this organization. In one of its most important sections, this constitution ascertained the right of the organization to receive all the

13 Ibid., 5.
14 *Mukatabat al-khuri Tuma Mazlum*, 54–55 (Greek Catholic Archives, Cairo).
15 Ibid., 62–63.
16 Ibid., 65.
17 Ibid., 8–9.

revenues from the various endowments for the poor (*awqaf al-fuqara'*) and to administer them. Certain of the support the organization would get from the Communal Commission, the latter was asked to confirm the statutes of the organization. Confirmation was obtained in November 1880 and the Commission explicitly transferred all authority concerning the support of the poor to the organization. In a letter written December 1, Tuma Mazlum recommended that the Patriarch recognize the statutes of the welfare organization and permit the transfer of revenues assigned to the support of the poor to the organization, as he had done already with such positive results in the case of the welfare organization in Alexandria.[18] The Patriarch granted recognition promptly.

Since all the members of the Communal Commission were also members of the welfare organization,[19] cooperation between the two institutions was easy. Authority over communal affairs was increasingly transferred to the welfare organization. In April 1882, responsibility for the two community schools in al-Azbakiya and in Shubra was handed over to the welfare organization together with all the sources of revenue assigned to them. After 1892, the organization subsidized medicine and medical treatment for the poor. In 1909 it opened the first clinic for the poor. Care for the aged as well as dowries for poor girls became concerns of the organization.

The welfare organization increasingly acquired the characteristics of a general, representative, communal organization. When, in 1889, one of the rare general assemblies of the community was held, it functioned simultaneously as the general meeting of the welfare organization. The head of the organization was also elected to the position of trustee of the poor on the Communal Commission. The same meeting voted for the consolidation of the income from all endowments which had been assigned by their donors for distinct purposes (e.g. support of the poor, education, church services, etc.) into one fund from which fixed sums were given to the church, the welfare organization, etc. The list for 1881 of religious endowments consisting of real estate in Cairo enumerated three churches, one cemetery, one dormitory for priests, four houses in al-Muski, thirteen in al-Azbakiya, two in Bab ash-Sha'riya and two in Bulaq.[20] Even though a number of these properties were designated by their donors for use by the church or the Patriarch, all of them were called communal endowments, *awqaf ta'ifiya*. Only the properties of the religious order were not considered part of the communal endowments.

The power of the welfare organization vis-à-vis the Church was based on its wealth, which was not only derived from control over the endowments but also, and more importantly, from the contributions of its wealthy members. In 1905, there even surfaced a proposal to fuse the funds of the endowments with the treas-

18 Ibid., 93.

19 See *Mukatabat*, 97, for the confirmation of the six members of the commission in May 1881: Hanna Zananiri, Dimitri 'Abduh, Jibra'il Niqula Kahil, Antun Saba', Najib 'Id, Rizqallah al-Jadd.

20 *'Id al-Khamsin* 27–28.

ury of the welfare society, arguing that only such a fusion could improve the critical situation of the endowment funds. The proposal was deferred, because just then the discussion of a constitutional reorganization of the community began.[21]

Upon demand by the government, a new constitution was drawn up for the community by a committee of five members, all of whom were or had been officers of the welfare organization.[22] The new constitution was accepted by the community in 1909, though implemented only in 1917. It provided for a Representative Council, *hai'a niyabiya*, of 24 members two thirds of whom were elected by the community, while the rest were appointed by the Patriarch or his representative, who also served as head of the council. A lay tribunal (*majlis milli*) was formed which was to deal with questions of inheritances, guardianship for minors, etc. Other subcommittees dealt with the administrative and financial aspects of the churches, the cemetery, endowments, and schools.[23] The welfare organization continued independently taking care of the poor. Only its buying and selling of endowment properties was subject to approval by the council.[24] A parallel council was established in 1909 for the community in Alexandria.

With the formation of these councils, the lay leadership of the community had consolidated its position. Before 1880, the Communal or Patriarchal Commission had controlled the affairs of the community. Though its members had been lay members of the community, all authority rested with the Patriarchal representative. The members of this commission and other leading elements of the community had gained emancipation from Patriarchal control by the creation of independent welfare organizations. The financial backing which these organizations enjoyed and the close collaboration between them and the Commission led the welfare organizations to assume more and more functions until it became almost the representative body of the community. The constitution of 1909 limited the power and functions of the welfare organization somewhat, but at the same time the lay leadership had gained control over communal affairs through the Council. The secularization of community leadership was now firmly established in Alexandria and in Cairo.

In the smaller towns, the struggle continued for awhile. The issues were the same: control over finances, the endowments, education, and the establishment of representative bodies. In Mansura, for example, the religious order of the Basilian Aleppine monks had traditionally provided clergy and guidance for the community, while at the same time controlling the endowments. The monks were unwilling to give up their preeminent position. Claims and counter-claims were made. Litigation and court trials dragged on into the 1920's. A letter written in 1918 by one of the lay members of the local community reflects not only the acrimony of the struggle

21 Ibid., 52.
22 Ilyas Ji'a, Ilyas Dibbana, Jibra'il Kahil, 'Abd al-'Aziz Kahil, Qustantin Qutta.
23 *Le Lien*, VII (1942), 74–76, 102–103.
24 *'Id al-Khamsin* 55.

but indicates also what degree secularization had undermined the position of the clergy in the public mind:

> Nos pères et nous avont fait, durant 60 ans, assez de sacrifices pour arriver à avoir une Église à nous et pour ne pas être soumis à un Ordre Religieux qui ne cherche qu'à s'enricher à nos dépens, au lieu de s'occuper d'oeuvres du paroisse qu'ils ignorent totalement, et a préparer au moins un sermon par an qu'ils sont incapables de prononcer.[25]

In the 1920's the trend toward secularization of leadership and communal organization had made great advances. But it stopped just short of eliminating the role and authority of the Church altogether. Religion, after all, had been the one formal, legal basis for the creation of the community, and its complete elimination from its life might have destroyed the justification for the continued existence of the community.

The Maronite community in Egypt had been guided from its inception by the monks of the Maronite Aleppine Lebanese Order. In fact, the order had been in Egypt before a Maronite community had developed. Well-organized and not lacking financial means, the order had bought land, built churches and established endowments. When the lay members of the community began to contest clerical rule, they had to challenge the power of the order rather than that of the church organization and the Patriarch in general.

In 1871, Jibra'il Sufair, head of the order in Egypt and priest of the community in Cairo tried to raise money for the construction of a church in Darb al-Junaina. The community balked and refused to give money if the church was going to be registered in the name of the order, not the community.[26] Shortly after the foundation of the Maronite welfare organization, arguments arose between Jibra'il Sufair and the organization over the management of the endowments and their revenues. As had been the case with the Greek Catholics, the welfare organization tried to gain control over the funds.[27]

A dispute between the community and the order over possession of church property occurred also in Mansura. There the community had decided in 1882 to build its own church in order to free themselves of the tutelage of the Lazarist order. Sufair, however, refused to contribute to this project as long as church and land were not going to be registered in the name of the order. Under the leadership of the wealthy merchant and entrepreneuer Khalil de Sa'b, the Maronites in Mansura tried to carry out their plan. In the end, however, the community was either unable or unwilling to provide all the necessary funds and the half-finished project was turned over to the ownership of the order, on the condition that it would be completed.[28]

25 *Communauté Grèque Catholique*, Ch. 8.
26 Khuri, 143–144.
27 Letter of Sufair to the Patriarch 1883, quoted in Khuri, 236–237.
28 Khuri, 258–278.

In Khartoum, members of the community and the order were for 17 years involved in litigation before the courts over the ownership of the land on which the church was built.[29] On the grounds that considerable contributions by the local community had made the acquisition of land and the construction of churches possible, the community often contested the ownership of churches, schools, land, etc. The order, however, usually succeeded in defending its property titles.

More successful was a different challenge to the power of the clergy. Until this time the Maronite clergy in Egypt consisted exclusively of members of the order under the authority of their superior in Lebanon. Since the end of the nineteenth century, voices could be heard among the Maronite immigrants demanding the appointment of a bishop for their community in Egypt. Ostensibly there was a need for a legal head of the community who could represent the community vis-à-vis the Egyptian government. But the bishop was also to be the direct representative of the Patriarch, creating a counterbalance to the authority of the order. After personal intervention by Khalil de Sa'b with the Patriarch in Lebanon in 1905, Yusuf Daryan was appointed bishop and patriarchal representative in Egypt. Henceforth, the community was to elect three candidates from whom the Patriarch would choose one for the position of bishop. These conditions were worked out in connection with an endowment for a church and the bishop's residence, which was provided by Khalil de Sa'b. The conditions of the endowment also made certain that its management would be in the hands of the community, not in the hands of the order.[30] Daryan proceeded to reduce the influence of the order over communal affairs. He established – at least in Alexandria – a committee dealing with personal law, to which also some of the lay dignitaries of the community were appointed.[31] At the same time, Maronite welfare organizations in various cities expanded their activities and took over more and more communal functions: monthly subsidies to the poor, free medical care, education, burial costs, etc. These activities were financed by contributions, membership fees, and the creation of their own endowments.[32]

The transfer of power from the clergy to the community, or more precisely to its wealthy and influential members, occurred without any ideological discussion. Nowhere do we read of a demand for constitutional rights of the individual, or democratic self-rule, nor do we hear of any secular nationalist demands for a Syrian or Arab orientation in the religious communities and their integration into an encompassing national society.

Only the case of the Greek Orthodox Syrians appeared to be different. Not only were they the first to found a welfare organization in Egypt, but the name of their society seemed to indicate greater national awareness which went beyond a strictly religious identity. The organization, founded in 1876 in Alexandria, was called

29 Ibid., 285–303.
30 Ibid., 303.
31 *Sijill al-kitabat ar-rasmiya min 1908* (Maron. Arch. Alexandria).
32 *Al-Kitab al-balatin*, 18–19.

"Syrian Greek Orthodox Welfare Society". Two years after the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty which promised genuine independence to Egypt, the organization replaced, in 1938, the adjective *Syrian* with *Egyptian*. Later under the influence of pan-arabism in Nasser's Egypt the name was changed once again, this time to "*Arab* Greek Orthodox". The Arabic-speaking, Greek Orthodox immigrants from Syria were faced in Egypt with the domination of the community by the Greek-speaking element, ten times as numerous as the Syrian Greek Orthodox. The Greeks in Egypt had begun to establish their communal institutions since the early 1830's. But from the very beginning their endeavors were of a secular, nationalist nature, recognized and protected by the Greek state. As Greek nationals, they were not subject to the authority of the Patriarch, the head of the Greek Orthodox *millet* of the Ottoman Empire. In purely religious matters they recognized the authority of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria, but in all communal affairs they were autonomous and were represented before the Egyptian government by the Greek consul, not the Patriarch. Tensions among the national Greek community, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, and the clergy arose repeatedly but they led to the increasing control of the community also over religious affairs.[33]

For the Greek Orthodox from Syria, the case was different. As Ottoman subjects, they came under the full jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, who was their formal head and representative with the Egyptian government. As in Syria, the Arabic-speaking community was ruled by a Greek-speaking clergy and in addition often overshadowed by the much larger Greek-speaking community in Egypt. The struggle between lay members and clergy for control over the community of the Syrian Greek Orthodox acquired, therefore, ethnic or national overtones.

The first exclusively Syrian Greek Orthodox parish was formed in Alexandria in the 1850's, from which time on separate records were kept. Other parishes consolidated in Tanta (1911), in Port Said (1923), in Cairo (1930), and in Mansura (1945). The first exclusive church for the Arabic-speaking community was built in Alexandria in 1888. As was the case with the other communities, the welfare organizations took over many of the communal tasks. Since all the clergy and most of the Greek Orthodox community in Egypt were Greek-speaking, the lay elite of the Syrian Greek Orthodox immigrants was, from the beginning, involved in a twofold attempt to gain communal autonomy from clerical rule as well as Greek domination.

One of the first major disputes between the Greek and the Syrian Greek Orthodox arose over the control of the 'Ubaidiya School in Cairo. The school had been founded and financed by Rufa'il and Hananiya (Ananias) 'Ubaid (Abet) in 1860. Opinions differ already as to whether the founders were Greek or Syrian,[34] though it seems certain that they were of Syrian origin. The school was well-endowed with

33 Politis, I, 260–270.

34 Politis, I, 444 claims that they were Greek or at least had a "conscience grèque", but Sékaly, 53, and Mubarak, II, 68, call them Syrians. Shuqair 1916, 237, traces the origin of their father to Ba'labakk.

LE 20,000 and 160 faddan of land.[35] It was put under the protection of the Russian – not the Greek – consulate in Cairo. The endowment deed stipulated a supervisory board with some Arabic- and some Greek-speaking members. Several members of the 'Ubaid family were on the board. The teaching of Arabic, Greek and French was also stipulated. In the 1890's the school had only a very small Arab section and by 1916 practically all of the 650 students were Greek-speaking.[36] Through the deliberate policy of the Archbishop of Sinai, head of the supervisory board, its membership had been hellenized; Greek had become the exclusive language of instruction; and the school had been accredited by the University of Athens, though its diploma was not recognized by the Egyptian government.[37] In 1907, the Arabic section was eliminated altogether.[38] The hellenization of this institution was symptomatic of the domination of the Greek element over the Syrian element in the Greek Orthodox community in Egypt. The school issue became the final cause that pushed the Syrian Greek Orthodox into action and let them articulate their grievances.

In May 1914, some 300 Syrian Greek Orthodox from Cairo and other cities convened at the headquarters of the Syrian Union. They elected a committee to deal with the issue of churches, endowments, and the 'Ubaidiya school, all of which they felt had come illegally under the exclusive control of the Greeks. The demand for a representative body of the Syrian community was also expressed.[39] The committee later assumed the name Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Syrian Egyptian Orthodox. With the help of the Russian consul, the committee gained temporary success. The Archbishop of Sinai was removed as president of the board, an Arabic section was reintroduced in the school, and several Syrians were appointed to the board. During the same time the Basili family, related to the 'Ubaid family by marriage, tried, with the help of Mikha'il Lutfallah, recently appointed member to the board, to claim ownership of the 160-faddan endowment of the school and thereby gain control over the management of the school. The case came to trial in 1920 and the Basilis were forced to return the land to the control of the supervisory board.[40]

In the same year, the Russian consul also reneged on his earlier decision and reinstated the Archbishop of Sinai as head of the board. The immediate reasons for this decision are not evident. On a more general level it signified the reduction of the Russian presence in the Middle East after the Bolshevik revolution, and the withdrawal of Russian political support which the Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox

35 Shuqair 1916, 246.
36 Ibid., 248.
37 Sékaly, 29.
38 Politis, 1, 462.
39 Listed as members of this committee were Edouard Ilyas, Michel Lutfallah, Na'um Shuqair, Sami Juraidini, Sami Qusairi, Salam Rizq, Athanasius and Achille Sékaly (ibid., 30).
40 Interview with the lawyer Drusso, former head of the Greek Orthodox Welfare Society in Cairo, Nov. 1978.

in the Ottoman Empire had enjoyed against the Greek-speaking clergy. After World War I, the Greek state became the major supporter of Greek Orthodox interests in Egypt as well as in Palestine, which implied a strengthening of the Greek-speaking elements at the cost of the ambitions for autonomy by the Arab-speaking communities.[41]

In 1924, a congress of the "Orthodox Syrian Egyptians" was held in Alexandria under the chairmanship of Najib Sursuq. With the strong support of such landowning and merchant families as the Dabbas and Dibbana, the congress demanded the establishment of a communal assembly, *majlis milli*, which was to be independent from the clergy and the Greeks.[42] The appointment of an Arabic-speaking bishop and greater Syrian representation in the general Greek Orthodox councils were also demanded. Apparently it was further suggested that only those who had Egyptian citizenship should be permitted to vote in the Greek Orthodox councils of Egypt. This proposition was, of course, immediately denounced by the Greek-speaking Greek Orthodox, most of whom held Greek citizenship at that time, while the Syrian Greek Orthodox had acquired Egyptian citizenship after World War I.[43] It took another ten years before local community councils for the Syrian Greek Orthodox were established. Significant for the role welfare societies had played in the communal organization is the fact that in Alexandria the welfare society itself was reconstituted as the "Community Council of the Egyptian Greek Orthodox". Community councils were also formed in Cairo in 1942 and in Tanta, Port Said, and Mansura in 1944. In the smaller towns where the Syrian Greek Orthodox were not numerous enough to form their own councils, they remained joined to the Greek-speaking communities. Though the spiritual authority of the Patriarch of Alexandria remained unchallenged, at least the larger communities of Syrian Greek Orthodox achieved full autonomy in all administrative and financial affairs.[44]

Welfare organizations also sprang up in various forms among the minor immigrant Christian communities such as the Jacobites, Chaldaeans, and Nestorians. In the case of the Syrian Catholic, the Uniate branch of the Jacobites, it was the wealthy Aleppine merchant, Jirjis Barahimsha, who founded and headed the welfare organization.[45]

In 1913 a "Muslim Syrian Welfare Society" was founded in Cairo. The initiative came apparently from the Aleppine merchant Husain al-'Amri, whose concern was for the "Muslim Syrian poor who live in Egypt".[46] No further information about

41 For a discussion of the Greek Orthodox community in Palestine see Tsimhoni, 77–121.

42 Zakhura 1927, 442.

43 *Le Patriarcat d'Alexandrie*, 7–9.

44 See for instance articles 1 and 2 of *an-Nizam al-asasi li-majlis wukala' kanisat ru'asa' al-mala'ika*, where even the right to choose priests for the community belongs to the lay committe of the community.

45 *Dalil*, 144.

46 Shuqair 1916, 756; Zakhura 1916, II, 460.

the fate of this society seems to be available. As the Muslims Syrians had never formed an independent community with their own religious authorities in Egypt, the formation of this welfare organization can obviously not be interpreted as an attempt – parallel to that in the Christian Syrian communities – toward secularization within the framework of a Syrian Muslim community. However, the mere fact that such an organization was established indicates that by 1913 even the Muslim Syrians did not feel fully integrated into Egyptian society.[47]

Through the establishment of welfare societies in the Christian Syrian communities in Egypt, power was gradually transferred from the clergy to the lay elites. Perhaps inspired by contemporary discussions of constitutionalism and trends toward representative government, and certainly emboldened by their growing material wealth, the merchant and entrepreneur class came to challenge the rule of the clergy. Universal suffrage or representative self-government were not really the key issues. The battle cry of this class was not as radical as "no taxation without representation". Rather, it was a discreetly uttered comment in the salons of the bourgeoisie that contributions would not be forthcoming if the donors did not have a decisive voice in their management and distribution. The privately initiated welfare societies proved to be the perfect instrument for this purpose. Membership was limited to those who contributed. The various committees were neither elected by nor answerable to the community as a whole. The greater the largesse of the donor, the greater his influence in the welfare society. The act of providing for the poor legitimized power. By means of the welfare societies, wealth could find its equivalent measure of political power in the community in a more precise way than universal voting rights and representative assemblies would have permitted.

A remarkable aspect of the secularization process in the communal leadership organizational structure was that it was at no point rationalized or justified by a concomitant ideological stand which would have justified the reduction of religious authority with the demand for constitutional rights. Nor did anyone espouse the vision of a secular national society leading either to the full integration of Egyptian society or at least the fusion of all denominational immigrant groups into one Syrian community, which would have strengthened the immigrants' position in Egypt.

Religion had been the foremost principle of communal organization and identity. When the power of the religious authorities was radically reduced – though never completely eliminated – the various communities emerged from this process of secularization, paradoxically, much stronger in their organizational patterns and inner coherence. Each community maintained its own churches, welfare societies, schools, etc. Where interdenominational welfare organizations were established, as for instance in Tanta, this was a result of a lack of independent resources. Only in

47 Cf. also the reaction of Kurd 'Ali to the proposal for a Muslim Syrian Society in Cairo a few years earlier; above p. 112.

such cases did the second criterion of identity, common origin, play an organizational role. Repeated efforts to found an interdenominational Syrian hospital in Cairo failed.[48]

If the Greek Orthodox immigrants from Syria called their community Syrian, then Egyptian, and later again an Arab Orthodox community, this was mainly done in order to distinguish themselves from the Greek-speaking community. At no point did the use of this terminology reflect a genuine willingness to fuse their own community into a national Syrian, Egyptian or Arab community. In 1897 'Abd al-Masih al-Antaki, a Greek Orthodox journalist and political activist, arrived in Cairo after having been involved in Damascus in the fight for the appointment of an Arabic-speaking Patriarch for the Greek Orthodox community there. Apparently disgusted with the whole affair, and disappointed in the clergy, he suggested in an article published in Cairo that the Syrian Greek Orthodox should join their Greek Catholic compatriots, in order to rid themselves once and for all of the Greek-speaking clergy. This proposal created such an outcry among his coreligionists that he never again dared to mention it, though personally he remained persuaded of its validity.[49] As late as 1947, it could be said about the Christian Syrian communities in Egypt that "The division into antagonistic sects had stood in the way of united action."[50]

There existed several reasons for the persistence and even strengthening of the communal structures in spite of the weakened role of religion, the one formal principle distinguishing them from each other and from the Egyptian environment.

In contrast to the Syrian intelligentsia, the commercial bourgeoisie could not see any advantage in national integration and independence. For those immigrants who were working in the press, education, or administration, Egyptian independence could have provided better opportunities for employment and given greater legitimacy to their work on the condition that they were fully accepted as members of Egyptian society. When this condition seemed less and less likely to be fulfilled, the immigrant intelligentsia turned to the idea of Syrian nationalism as a framework for

48 *'Id al-Khamsin*, 80. Upon the inquiry by a reader whether Syrians in Egypt and America should form clubs and unite, the editors of *al-Muqtataf* (XXVIII, 1903, 978) respond that only a common aim unites people, but Syrians have been divided since centuries by religion and share no common aim.

49 Zakhura 1916, III, 60. A typical case of intercommunal rivalry was reported from Port Said in 1887. There the chief of the Greek Catholic community (*shaikh at-ta'ifa*) had been the spokesman for all the local Syrians, including the Muslims, ever since the opening of the Suez Canal. After the numerical increase of all the Syrian communities in Port Said each insisted on its own spokesman. This was granted by the government in 1882. Five years later the government appointed a Maronite as representative for all the Syrian communities. Against this step the Greek Catholics protested vehemently and demanded that the Patriarchal representative in Cairo intervene with the government on their behalf (Letter from the Greek Catholic Community in Port Said July 1887, *A'mal al-Batrakkhana 1886–1891*, Greek Catholic Archives, Cairo, p. 14).

50 Issawi 1947, 165.

their own professional and political activities. A certain number of this group returned indeed to Syria after World War I when the short-lived regime of Faisal seemed to fulfill their national as well as professional hopes.

To the commercial bourgeoisie of the Syrian minorities in Egypt, the situation presented itself in a different light. In the early twentieth century, Egypt's commercial life was in the hands of Europeans and other local foreign minorities such as the Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Syrians. Though the Syrians very rarely enjoyed the legal benefits of foreign nationality, as did the other minorities, their language knowledge and the fact of their being non-Egyptian Christians created a proximity to the Europeans and their governments which provided a certain degree of protection and access to trade with Europe. It was therefore in the interest of the commercial bourgeoisie to maintain its minority character. Integration into Egyptian society would have endangered the connections to the European trade. In addition, the creation of a Syrian national state did not hold the commercial promise which Egypt was already fulfilling. If a return to Syria seemed unattractive, it certainly seemed even less advisable for those Syrians who continued to live and work in Egypt to adopt a Syrian nationalist stance. This could only further kindle the anti-Syrian sentiments of the Egyptians, while at the same time the Syrians could not hope for political support and protection from mandatory Syria and Lebanon, as for instance the Greeks received from Greece.

The commercial bourgeoisie was well served by the minority status their communities enjoyed. This status afforded maximum autonomy in the internal affairs of the communities, it maintained a certain cultural and even legal distance from the Egyptian society, and it provided commercial and increasingly cultural ties with Europe.

The non-Egyptians controlling Egypt's commerce did not constitute a homogeneous group. They consisted rather of a variety of foreign minorities. Though an ethnic division of labor in its precise sense was not characteristic of the situation,[51] ethnicity continued to play a role in the patterns of competition, formation of business associations, and employment. With the notable exception of some large land development and utilities companies, private business was by and large founded and owned by individual families. When the size of the enterprise demanded employment of people other than family members, this occurred usually in the framework of their own community, where a greater degree of loyalty and trust could be expected. This pattern in itself emphasized identification with one's own community, reinforced intracommunal relations, and sharpened the sense of intercommunal competition.

The secularization of the community leadership and the concomitant establishment of welfare organizations institutionalized a highly effective patronage system providing tangible benefits for the poorer groups as well as for the commercial

51 See above pp. 119–120.

bourgeoisie of each community. Through the welfare organizations, free schooling, medical treatment, food, and even monthly subsidies were made available to the poor and the lower class.[52] These material benefits became a strong incentive for maintaining loyalty to the respective community, since only affiliation with it qualified a person to receive these benefits. In the same spirit, the enterprises of the commercial bourgeoisie provided employment for the lower class of the community. A horizontal integration with the Egyptian lower class would have cancelled out all these material advantages. With these measures, the commercial bourgeoisie succeeded at the same time in meeting their own business needs by creating a labor force whose loyalty was guaranteed by material rewards going far beyond the payments of wages, and by the fostering of a strong group identity. The vertical social integration in each of these communities remained stronger and more attractive than any horizontal integration with the Egyptian social environment. The patronage systems gained institutional forms in each community independently. They prevented not only integration with Egyptian society but also the fusion of all Syrian communities into one organizational entity.

C. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE SYRIAN IMMIGRANTS SINCE WORLD WAR I

The rather ambivalent status of the Syrians within Egyptian society did not hinder them from participating fully in the Egyptian economy during the 1920's and 30's and from benefiting in particular from the economic boom during World War II. Established enterprises such as the Sidnawi Department Stores or the Commercial and Estate Co. of Egypt, which belonged to the Karam family in Alexandria, continued to prosper. Dar al-Hilal had been something of a shoestring operation dedicated exclusively to the publication of J. Zaidan's magazine *al-Hilal*. Under the directorship of his son Émile it was transformed during the 1920's into a diversified and highly profitable publishing house, where such widely read magazines as *al-Musawwar* were founded. New companies, especially in textile production, were founded by the Shurbajis, the Qabbanis and others. Other Syrians expanded their economic activities by buying shares of existing companies, as did J. Kfuri who had founded in 1932 the Fayyum Omnibus Co. SAE and bought a controlling interest in the 1906-founded Fayyum Light Railways Co. in 1939.

The listings of companies and directors on the boards of companies supplied in the *Stock Exchange Yearbooks of Egypt* between 1943 and 1963 provide us with a great deal of information on the role of Syrians in the Egyptian economy. Directors of boards could hold positions in more than one company. The amount of

52 For a study of the household budget of Syrian workers in Egypt in 1911 see Vallet, 106–111. Only contributions from the communal welfare organizations enabled the working class families to balance their budget.

economic power held by one individual could be reflected by the number of positions he held on different boards.[53]

Table 17: Positions held by directors (in percentages)[54]

number of positions held by one director	total directors	total positions	Syrian directors	Syrian positions
1943				
1	61	27	62	36
2–5	32	38	34	44
6 & more	7	35	4	20
	100	100	100	100
1947/48				
1	59	27	50	22
2–5	33	43	40.5	49
6 & more	8	30	9.5	29
	100	100	100	100
1951				
1	57	26	56	27
2–5	35	44	40	60
6 & more	8	30	4	13
	100	100	100	100

It appears that the overall relation between directors and number of positions held did not differ very much in the Syrian case from the general situation. But it is noticeable that Syrian individuals concentrated a large number of positions in their hands less frequently. Since their absolute numbers were rather small, sudden variations could already occur when one or two directors became unusually active as in 1947–1948 when 9.5% of all Syrian directors controlled 29% of all Syrian-held positions. But in general, the distribution of positions among Syrian directors was more even. Few Syrians were super-rich or politically powerful, nor were they part of the Bank Misr conglomerate, where the same persons reappeared again and again on the boards of a large number of subsidiaries.

Comparing the overall numbers of Syrian directors and the numbers of positions they held with the total amount of directors and positions, we can determine the relative size of Syrian participation in economic activities:

53 Economic power obviously also depended upon the size of the companies. But the information available is not precise enough to establish a clear-cut relationship between directors and the actual amount of shares they held.

54 This and the following tables are all compiled from the *Stock Exchange Yearbooks of Egypt*. The yearbooks were usually published in the spring of the following year and reflected the situation at the point rather of the indicated year alone.

Table 18: Number of Jewish and Syrian directors & positions compared with total numbers

	directors			positions		
	total	Jewish	Syrian	total	Jewish	Syrian
1943	728	112 (15.4)*	45 (6.1)	1626	262 (16)	77 (4.7)
1947/8	1103	140 (12.7)	73 (6.6)	2411	305 (12.6)	170 (7)
1951	1248	111 (8.9)	108 (8.6)	2749	264 (9.6)	223 (8.1)
1960	1399	7 (0.5)	100 (7.1)	1886	8 (0.4)	148 (7.8)
1961/2	950	–	10 (1)	–	–	–

* Percentages of total numbers in brackets.

Before the socialist legislation of 1961–1962 the Syrians, in terms of directors and positions in stock companies, maintained a steady share of between 6 to 8.5% – or roughly twenty times their relative size in the Egyptian population. Until the revolution of 1952, they were able to slowly increase their participation. From then on until 1962 they were just barely able to hold their position. In contrast, the Jewish share of directors and positions decreased consistently after 1943 and already before the socialist legislation it was practically nonexistent. The Jew's loss might occasionally have been the Syrians' gain, as was apparently the case in the Wadi Kom Ombo Co. where after 1957 the names of Mosseri and Harari, two of the foremost Jewish families in Egypt, disappear from the board of directors while two Syrians, Bulad and Tawil, are nominated as members. But it would be misleading to assume that the Syrians simply replaced the Jewish element. This becomes particularily evident in the period 1951–1960 when the number of Jewish directors dropped from 111 to 7, and that of Syrian directors also decreased, though moderately (108 to 100).

The rate of increase in the number of Syrian directors and the positions held by them lies nevertheless significantly above the general rate of increase during the period 1943–1951.

Table 19: Rates of increase

period	number of directors			number of positions		
	total	Syrian	Jewish	total	Syrian	Jewish
1943–1947/48	1.42	1.62	1.25	1.48	2.27	1.16
1947/48–1951	1.13	1.48	0.79	1.14	1.31	0.87
1951–1960	1.12	0.93	0.06	0.69	0.66	0.03

This phenomenon of higher Syrian increase rates is at least partially explained by the effects of Law 138 (1947), article 4 which decreed that forty percent of all positions on the boards of directors had to be held by Egyptian nationals. Directors of Syrian origin almost always held Egyptian citizenship, but were culturally and socially closely integrated into the local foreign bourgeoisie and therefore often

more acceptable to foreign-controlled stock companies than indigenous Egyptians. The true Egyptianization of stockholding companies occurred during the 1950's with the removal of the Jews and many Europeans from the boards of directors and with the confiscation of Belgian, French, British, and Jewish property during 1957–1958. This Egyptianization, however, did not favor the directors of Syrian origin: the relative and absolute number of positions they held did not increase. The sudden and complete elimination of the Syrians from stockholding companies after the promulgation of the socialist laws is evident from table 18.

The socialist laws aimed, of course, at the destruction of the old bourgeoisie and its replacement by the state and its functionaries. There existed neither in the military nor in the bureaucracy Syrians who could have played a part in the take-over and continued as functionaries in the Egyptian economy. The socialist laws meant not only the increasing control of the state over the economy but also implied Egyptianization. While a number of Egyptian company owners were able to continue working as managers in their nationalized companies, this was never the case with Syrians. This is especially remarkable when we consider that most Syrians were Egyptian citizens – a point to which we shall return.

If we look at the ethnic composition of the boards of directors in which Syrians held positions, we can discern two basic patterns of Syrian participation in stockholding companies. The first type of company was the family business which at some point went public, whether in order to generate capital or – in later years – to ensure easier liquidity, should the political necessity to sell quickly arise. After going public, the family usually maintained exclusive or at least majority control over the board.

The Sidnawi Ltd. was one of the most successful and best-known Syrian enterprises. It ran large department stores in all the major cities. Founded in 1878, it had become a stockholding company in 1907. Between 1943 and 1951 the same three members of the Sidnawi family, Joseph, George, and Élie, alone constituted the board of directors. None of them held positions in any other company.

The Périodiques Égyptiens SAE was founded in 1941 as a subsidiary to Al-Hilal Publishing House. In 1943 its directors were Émile and Shukri Zaidan, sons of the founder, Michel Sam'an, their brother-in-law, Sami Juraidini, another Syrian' and Muhammad Fikri Abaza, the Egyptian author and long-time collaborator of the Zaidans. But from 1947–1948 until the company was dissolved in 1960, only Émile and Shukri remained the directors. They also were the exclusive directors of the Al-Hilal Publishing House, which went public in 1947 and was nationalized in 1960.

The Sudan Import & Export Co., founded in 1920, had the following directors in 1943: A.N. Cohen, Ovadia Salem, J.H. Tutunji, G.H. Tutunji, and E.H. Tutunji. The two Jewish members left the company after 1948. After that, only Tutunjis were on the board of directors. In 1961, the company was incorporated into the government-run General Interior Trading Company, and all Tutunjis were removed from the management at that time.

The timber business of S. Karam & Frères, founded in Alexandria in 1848, went public in 1904 as the Commercial and Estate Company of Egypt. Until the company's nationalization in 1961, the Karam family controlled the board of directors. One of the Karams was also on the board of the Alexandria Tramway Company and the Alexandria Insurance Company.

The second type of company in which Syrians participated was, ethnically speaking, diffuse, including people of different religion and origin, without any element necessarily having a dominant position. Such companies dealt usually with public utilities, land development, and communications.

J. Kfuri had begun business with a few bus lines in the Fayyum. In 1939, he acquired a considerable interest in the Fayyum Light Railways Company and joined the board as managing director. The other board members were 'Abd al-Hamid Sulaiman, Isma'il Sidqi, G.J. Mosseri, Louis van Damme, H.S.V. Mosseri and L.A. Hugh-Jones. In the Société des Autobus de la Basse Égypte SAE, founded in 1948, the Kfuri family had considerable but not dominant interests. Apart from three Kfuris there were five Egyptians, two European Jews, and one Greek on the board of directors. J. Kfuri was also on the board of the SA des Chemins de Fer de la Basse Egypte. The other directors were Isma'il Sidqi, Louis Lahemère, Charles Singaglia, Henry Urban, L. van Damme, and 'Abd al-Jalal Abu Samra. In the Commercial Insurance Company, founded in 1946, J. Kfuri was a director together with Elie Politi, 'Abd al-Jalil Abu Samra, Wahib Dos, Naldrett-Jays, Ibrahim Badr ad-Din, Léon Castro, Gustave Riches, and I. Leviant.

Count 'Aziz de Sa'b's family had made its fortune in land development and cotton. Before World War I they founded the Association of Cotton Growers and the Gharbieh Land Company. By 1943, the following were members of the board of the former company: de Sa'b, Klat, Muhammad Ahmad Farghali, Joseph Fares, G. Moraitinis, Silvio Pinto, and Theodorakis. On the board of the latter were: Léon Rolen, J.A. Adda, Klat, Levi, H.S.V. Mosseri, François Rom, Ya'qub Sabri, Ezio Vais, and Muhammad 'Irfan.

Syrian families holding most positions as directors were the Kfuri, Tutunji, and Sursuq families, whose members in 1947–1948 held 16, 9 and 11 positions respectively on various company boards.

This second type of Syrian participation in stockholding companies developed either through the conversion of family enterprises into truly public companies, where additional stockholders eliminated family control, or through acquistion of stocks by Syrian individuals in already established companies. In either case the ethnic composition of the boards of directors came to reflect the mixture of European and Mediterranean, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian elements which was so typical of the local foreign bourgeoisie of Egypt.

What is most remarkable about these patterns is what is missing. On the one hand, there were companies tightly controlled by individual Syrian families – i.e., the continuation of traditional familiy business patterns in a more modern form. On the other hand, there were companies in which individual Syrians participated,

without the Syrian element exercising a majority or exclusive control over the companies. In other words, once the family framework of doing business was transcended we cannot find typically "Syrian companies", i.e., companies in which a common Syrian origin served as a basis for economic collaboration. Similarly, we cannot speak of "Greek Catholic" or "Maronite companies".

Although the sense of a shared Syrian communality undoubtedly existed among the Syrians in Egypt, the search for capital or investment opportunities and for legal protection led the Syrian businessman after World War I without fail to cooperate with the local foreign bourgeoisie. If the Syrian commercial bourgeoisie wanted to flourish, it could do so only through integration into the local foreign bourgeoisie. As a group on its own, it had neither the numerical strength, nor the capital, nor the legal privileges which the local foreign bourgeoisie could offer.

The economic dissolution of the Syrian element into the local foreign bourgeoisie likewise did not permit the creation of an ethnic division of labor. Only some vague trends can be observed: we find hardly any Syrians in tourism and banking.[55] A traditional inclination – this is particularily true for family business – can be noted for commerce on the import/export and on the retail levels, with a special interest in textiles. Some Syrians can also be found in the public utilities companies and transportation companies. Of the 22 land development companies listed in 1947–1948, 6 had Syrian directors on their boards. But only one, the Cairo Agricultural Company, seems to have been controlled by Syrians, the Michel Lutfallah family. In the other five companies, Syrians shared control with Egyptians, Jews, Greeks, etc. The names Sursuq, Bulad, Sa'b, and, of course, Lutfallah, which appear on these boards, point precisely to those families who already in the 19th century had established a vested interest in agricultural land. None of these six companies, which owned between 500 and 14,000 faddan, could compare in size with the Behera SAE (59,000 faddan) or the Wadi Kom Ombo Company (70,000 faddan), the directors of which were predominantly Jewish.

The economic activities of one specific group of Syrians deserve our attention. In the late 1920's and 1930's a number of Muslim Syrian families, mainly from Damascus and Aleppo, came to Egypt to establish specialized textile production, such as hosiery and underwear, but also materials for furniture upholstery, etc. The Shurbaji, Qabbani, Mardini, Halbuni, Abu 'Auf, and Kasm families had been explicitly encouraged by Bank Misr and Tal'at Harb to come to Egypt with the purpose of setting up a local competition to foreign merchandise.[56] The activities of these families differed from those of earlier immigrants. Rather than trading in textiles, they concentrated on the industrial production of textiles, following industrialization policies of the Bank Misr group. As textile producers they were highly qualified.

55 In the *SEYB* 1943 21 banks and their boards of directors are listed. Many Greek, Jewish, English and also Egyptian (Bank Misr) names are listed, but not a single Syrian one.

56 Interview with Saif ad-Din Shurbaji, July 31, 1982 in Cairo, and with 'Abdallah Rashid Qabbani, July 29, 1982 in Cairo.

Three of the four Shurbaji brothers who settled in Egypt in 1932 had previously studied textile engineering in Germany. 'Abdallah Rashid Qabbani had studied from 1920–1923 at the École Superieure de Tissage in Lyon before he set up a mechanical weaving plant in Damascus and later in Egypt.[57] The combination of family enterprise and modern technical skills proved to be a highly successful one. Each of these family businesses fared well, and only rarely was the need felt to join forces with other families in common ventures. The Textile Spinning Company in Alexandria was such a joint enterprise set up by the Shurbaji, Halbuni, and Sarabji families. Similarly the Qabbanis, Shurbajis and Mardinis founded a company in Cairo for the production of furniture covering materials. These were apparently attempts to keep the monopoly on specialized textile production in the hands of these few families. All these Muslim Syrian families continued to enjoy economic success until the socialist laws of 1961–1962 nationalized their enterprises.

Some of the best known and oldest names of Syrian families are noticeably absent from the lists of the stock exchange year books, such as the Kahil, Sakakini, and Bahri families. The old rule "from shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves in three generations" may have something to do with this phenomenon, though these families lasted for more than three generations and did not exactly return to shirt sleeves. Rather, they led fairly comfortable lives as rentiers, the younger generation often turning away from business to the professions.

The case of the Sakakini family confirms such an assumption. The family had immigrated about 1770 from Damascus. A land grant in Fajjala, just outside the Bab al-Hadid, from Muhammad 'Ali led the Sakakinis into urban development and contracting. Habib Pasha Sakakini (1830–1923) was to become a developer in great style. There was hardly a major building activity in which he did not take part.[58] He was a pillar of the Greek Catholic community in Cairo, donating land to the Church and money for the *waqf* of the poor. His relations with the Ottoman court were excellent and the title Pasha was bestowed upon him. After his death the fortunes he had accumulated melted away in the hands of a generation of "men of the free professions or simply bon vivants". They squandered the money and used large sums in a sordid fight over the remainders of the inheritance.[59]

Though there were among the Syrian families those whose fortunes were for individual reasons already on the decline, there can be no doubt that the socialist laws of 1961–1962 put an abrupt end to the great economic success Syrians were enjoying in Egypt. The lists in the *Stock Exchange Year Books* are evidence for how within a year Syrians were eliminated from the Egyptian economy. The material loss of the Syrian commercial bourgeoisie was undoubtedly great. The birth statistics of the various communities bear ample testimony for the sudden

57 Ibid.

58 E.g. the Cairo Opera, the Suez Canal, the Sakakini quarter were developments in which he participated.

59 Interview with Henri Habib Sakakini, July 30, 1982, Cairo.

departure of the Syrians during the 1960's. All the evidence points toward a direct and causal link between nationalization of property and emigration. Yet by no means all Syrians had owned enterprises worth confiscating; many had smaller retail shops, were employees, or worked as professionals. The material losses of the Syrian commercial bourgeoisie in themselves are not a sufficient explanation for the almost complete emigration of all the Syrians, after living in Egypt for several generations.

In contrast to other minorities such as the Greeks, the Italians, or the French, the Syrians shared a common cultural origin with the Egyptians. Unlike the European minorities, they were legally Egyptians. Nor did there exist a specific political hostility against them as was the case with the Jewish minority after 1948. If the Syrians nevertheless chose the extreme step of emigration – and, significantly, they did not remigrate to the countries of their origin – then the material losses they suffered in 1961–1962 cannot be the sole cause. Rather, we will have to turn for an explanation to the cultural and social role and identity the Syrians acquired in Egypt during the 20th century.

CHAPTER 6

CULTURAL ALIENATION AND EMIGRATION

The period immediately preceding World War I appeared to be in many ways a time of great success and well-being for the Syrians in Egypt. A steady flow of immigrants appeared to fortify their presence in the country; the community organizations were emerging stronger than before from the secularization process; most Syrians were doing extremely well for themselves in commercial or professional life. The Syrian intellectuals were in the forefront of the Arab political and cultural revival; and though there were some unpleasant or even threatening rumblings coming form the Egyptian nationalists, the bulk of the Syrians felt quite secure as Ottoman citizens in an Egypt under British control.

This apparent sense of security had been fostered initially by the acquisition of legitimate status as *millet* groups in the 1840's. The heavy influx of other immigrants, the development of a multitude of religious and national minorities, and the increasing European presence seemed to make their existence as a minority not only safe but almost desirable. Though in contrast to most other immigrants the Syrians did not enjoy the capitulary privileges of foreigners, they felt that their link to international trade, their religious communality with the Europeans, and their command of European languages were sufficient reason for the European rulers to protect them. It seemed good politics to cultivate economic and cultural links to the Europeans. The Egyptian nationalist movement was not yet strong enough to confront the Syrians with the alternatives of either full integration with or elimination from Egyptian society. The immigrant could apparently continue to insist on his communal and increasingly cultural separateness from Egyptian society and yet feel perfectly at home and permanently settled in Egypt. A radical decision for or against Egyptian society seemed before World War I neither socially nor politically necessary. Total integration was not desired; for emigration there was no cause. After World War I, the intellectual and cultural engagement of the Syrians in Egyptian society receded, as we shall see. But the continued economic success of the Syrian bourgeoisie reinforced the impression that the question of integration did not constitute a problem.

The impression that full integration into Egyptian society was a non-issue was, however, temporary and misleading. Marginal integration could not be a permanent or stable situation. In fact, we can observe since the 19th century developments which made social integration less and less likely. In this context we should emphasize again the legitimization of the religious communities as separate entities in the

1840's and their successful restructuring under the impact of secularization, discussed earlier, as well as the increasing orientation toward European culture and society which shall be discussed further on.

After the end of the 19th century, it can be observed how the rising Egyptian nationalism began to challenge the Syrian position, first in the administration and the press, later in the economy. Increasing reluctance on the part of the Syrians to be absorbed into Egyptian society was accompanied by an increasingly articulate Egyptian nationalism rejecting the Syrians' role in Egypt.

A cultural de-Arabization of the Syrian immigrants and the simultaneous Egyptianization of state and society in Egypt are the two processes which since World War I determine the relations between Egyptian society and the Syrians, leading eventually to the elimination of the latter. On first sight it appears that the revolutionary regime after 1952 caused the departure of the Syrians from Egypt. In fact, the process leading to it began much earlier and can be traced in the trends of Egyptian legislation, in the economy, and in the development of cultural orientation, and identity.

We shall first discuss Egyptian legislation concerning citizenship and personal status law. This will provide the technical information concerning the legal status of the immigrant. The trend of Egyptian legislation in these matters since the turn of the century also reflects in itself the changing attitude of the Egyptian state and society toward non-Egyptians in general and Syrian immigrants in particular.

The Khatt-i Humayun of 1856 had established in unequivocal terms the full equality of all Ottoman subjects irrespective of religion. As Syria and Egypt were both provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Syrian immigrants in Egypt enjoyed, regardless of whether they were Christian or Muslim, legal status equal to that of the native Egyptians. The Ottoman law of January 19, 1869, concerning Ottoman nationality confirmed this situation by conferring Ottoman nationality to all individuals whose fathers were Ottomans.

Juridically, Egypt remained an Ottoman province until 1914. But at least since the British occupation of 1882, Egypt's political and economic concerns differed drastically from those of the rest of the Ottoman Empire. One consequence of this divergent development was that eventually a need also arose for legal differentiation between "Egyptians" and "Ottomans". A first step in this direction was taken with the decree of 1892, limiting admission to positions in the Government administration to Egyptians alone. Article 19 of this decree states that "Egyptians are Ottoman subjects born in Egypt, or Ottoman subjects who have at least resided 15 years in Egypt." The law, in fact, constituted a specific attempt to control the number of Syrian immigrants in the administration and to give Egyptians greater access to government positions. Riyad Pasha had proposed in 1890 prohibiting Syrians altogether from government service. The decree of 1892 was a compromise between him and Cromer, who strongly felt that the skills and talents of the Syrians were needed in the Egyptian administration. Protective measures for the Egyptian Muslim employee were of no avail in his opinion. Only if the Egyptian "braces himself to

the work he may yet beat the Syrian with the latter's own weapons".[1] It is doubtful that the law had in practice any effect on the number of Syrians employed in government service. The number of "Syrians and other foreigners" in government service almost doubled between 1896 and 1906 from 690 to 1252.[2] The later preponderance of Syrians in the administration of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, however, suggests that it became increasingly difficult for the Syrian immigrant to enter Egyptian government service proper.

The Decree of June 29, 1900, gave a first comprehensive definition as to who was an "Egyptian local subject". According to this decree Egyptians were:

Article 1

A. All living in Egypt since before January 1, 1848.

B. Ottoman subjects born in Egypt who continued to live there.

Article 2

Ottoman subjects established in Egypt for 15 years, who have made a declaration to the *mudir* of their place of domicile.[3]

This decree made Syrian immigrants automatically "local subjects" after completion of fifteen years of declared residence in Egypt.

The issue of "Egyptian local subjects" gained new urgency with the outbreak of World War I and the declaration of a British protectorate over Egypt. Ottoman sovereignty over Egypt was no longer recognized and non-Egyptian Ottoman subjects became in theory enemy aliens. Through various legal decrees, however, Ottoman subjects, even if domiciled for less than fifteen years in Egypt, were in fact recognized as "local subjects".[4]

A permanent definition of Egyptian nationality was arrived at only with the Law Number 19 of February 1929. Section 3 of article 1 stated that "Ottoman subjects who had their permanent residence in Egypt at the date of November 5, 1914, and have maintained this residence until the promulgation of the present law are considered to have acquired the full rights of Egyptian nationality as of this date." Article 3 also enabled Ottoman subjects who came to Egypt after November 5, 1914, and had made it their permanent domicile to apply for Egyptian citizenship within a year of the issuance of the Law Number 19. Article 2 excluded only those Ottomans who after the Treaty of Lausanne had explicitly opted for Turkish nationality or that of other territories separated from the Ottoman Empire.[5] Since Syrian immigration had virtually ceased with the outbreak of World War I, all Syrian immigrants automatically became Egyptians unless they explicitly opted for Syrian or Lebanese citizenship. Acquisition of such citizenship, however, did not

1 Cromer, II, 216–217.

2 See p. 100 and also *al-Muqatataf*, XX (1895/96), 465, where in 1895 the observation is made that there are many exemptions from this law.

3 For the full text see Scott, 106.

4 Assabghi, 120.

5 Ibid., 197.

imply enjoyment of capitulary privileges as foreigners in Egypt. Already in 1925, an agreement between Egypt and the French mandatory power had declared all Lebanese and Syrian subjects to be under French diplomatic protection, but *"cette protection ne confère présentement aux dits citoyens syriens et libanais aucune immunité ni privilèges jurisdictionnels ou fiscaux ni, en général, aucune des prérogatives se rattachant au régime capitulaire dont ils ne joussaient pas auparavant."*[6]

To become Egyptian was made extremely easy for the Syrian immigrant and former Ottoman subject. To become Syrian or Lebanese required specific legal action, without bestowing any specific legal benefits or diplomatic immunity. The large majority of the immigrants residing at the time in Egypt accepted Egyptian citizenship. The impact of these legal conditions is clearly reflected by the data of the census of 1937 in Egypt.

Table 20:[7] *Citizenship of Syrians and Greeks residing in Egypt*

Syrians		Greeks		Nationality
33.748	(90%)	15.233	(17%)	Egyptian
–		4.234	(5%)	British
–		2.143	(2.5%)	Italian
46		287	(0.5%)	Turkish
–		68.559	(76%)	Greek
1.967	(5%)	–		French
1.931	(5%)	–		Syrian/Palest.
37.692		90.456		total

The large majority of the Syrian immigrants had accepted Egyptian citizenship. Only a fraction opted for citizenship of their land of origin. In the case of the Greek community, the situation was the exact reverse, with three quarters of all Greeks maintaining or acquiring Greek citizenship.

After the final abolition of capitulary privileges and the promulgation of a new civil code in 1949, a new law concerning Egyptian nationality was issued. Law Number 160 of 1950 differed from the law of 1929 only in a small but important point. Section 5 of article 1 stated that Ottoman subjects who had lived in Egypt before November 1914 and had continued to make it their permanent domicile until 1929 – this included the bulk of the Syrian immigrants – would be recognized as Egyptians if they applied for a certificate of nationality within one year after promulgation of Law 160. Articles 20 and 25 stated that the burden of proof of the right to citizenship was on the applicant. This meant that former Ottoman subjects were no longer a priori recognized as Egyptians. It has been estimated that in 1950 only ten percent of them had already a certificate of citizenship.[8] These new

6 Ibid., 119.
7 *Annuaire statistique 1942–1943.*
8 Haddad, T. 1951, 107.

qualifications and restrictions were not lifted with a further law on Egyptian citizenship which was issued five years after the 1952 Revolution. With the policies of the economic opening (*infitah*) in 1973 a new law was issued which restricted the right to import from abroad to Egyptians only. "Egyptian" here was defined as somebody whose father was born in Egypt. By this time most Syrians had already left the country, but for those who had stayed it constituted in most cases a further restriction. For the Syrian immigrant these legal developments must have been disquieting. He had always been aware of the precariousness of his position in Egyptian society, and now he could not take his legal status and rights to citizenship for granted anymore.

The question of Egyptian citizenship must, however, be clearly separated from the issue of application of personal law codes according to which Ottoman subjects and, later, Egyptian citizens were judged by their respective religious communities. Muslim law had always recognized the rights of *ahl adh-dhimma*, i.e. the Jews and the Christians, to considerable juridical autonomy. This included at a minimum all laws concerning marriage, divorce, guardianship, inheritance, and religious rituals. The Khatt-i Humayun of 1856 had reasserted the sovereignty of the various non-Muslim communities over personal law. For Egypt, the Mixed Civil Code drafted in 1876 for use in the Mixed Courts confirmed the already existing arrangement that for all "questions of marriage including capacity to marry, the formalities of marriage, the rights and duties of husband and wife, the custody of children and the dissolution of marriage, questions as to adoption, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of children, and the recognition of natural children; all questions of capacity to perform juristic act and questions of tutory, curatory and interdiction; all questions as to gifts, wills and successions ab intestato", separate courts dealing with personel law would be competent. "The Personal Court competent depends, in the first place, on the nationality of the party interested. If the party is a foreigner, his Consular Court is competent, and the law of his own country applies. If, however, the party interested is a native, the court competent will depend upon the religion of the party, that is to say, the court of his religious community will be competent, and the law applied will be his religious law."[9]

The authority of the religious courts over legal issues concerning personal status was also confirmed after Egypt gained independence in 1922. Personal law of Muslims was dealt with by the *shari'a* courts, that of Jews by the Rabbinate, and that of Christians by the various Patriarchates and communal tribunals.

The first challenge to the authority of the religious courts developed in 1949 with the abolition of the Mixed Courts. According to the agreement of Montreux in 1937, capitulary privileges for foreigners were to be abrogated after a twelve-year transitional period. As of 1949, foreigners were to be judged by Egyptian courts according to Egyptian law. This nationalization of jurisdiction did not imply

9 Scott, 250–251.

in any sense a secularization of the law or abolition of the religious courts for personal law. In 1948–1949, however, there was a move under way in the Egyptian senate – apparently in a deliberate confusion of the issues – to abolish the religious courts together with the Mixed Courts for foreigners. The protest of the non-Muslim communities was as prompt as it was intense.[10]

The new civil code, which came into force in Oktober 1949, recognized implicitly the juridical authority of the religious courts concerning matters of personal status. Article 12, for instance, reads: "The fundamental conditions relating to the validity of marriage are governed by the (national) law of each of the two spouses." In the official French version the word "national" is inserted before "law", but is missing in the Arabic version.[11] Articles 875 and 915 explain that wills and the appointment of heirs will be ruled by Muslim law, acknowledging tacitly the application of religious law of the various non-Muslim communities for other questions of personal status.

While this challenge to the juridical authority of the religious communities over matters of personal law remained unsuccessful, it pointed in the direction of further developments. The decisive step was taken under Nasser with the promulgation of Law Number 462 in 1955.[12] With one stroke, all the religious courts for personal law were abolished and their jurisdiction was transferred to the national courts, *al-mahakim al-wataniya*. In justification of this step, it was argued that a situation was unacceptable in which Egyptian citizens were judged by different laws and laws which were legislated by institutions outside the authority of the Egyptian Republic, as was for instance the case with Roman Catholic law. The difficulty of creating a unified secular personal law for all Egyptians was implicitly recognized by the fact that only the court system was unified while for the time being at least, the different personal law codes were still applied to the members of the respective communities (Article 6).

The intention of Law 462 had been the secularization and nationalization of jurisdiction in Egypt. But a look at its various articles shows that, in effect, Islamic law continued to apply and, in some regards, its role was even enhanced. Article 6 states that the *shari'a* law is to be applied in all cases except when both litigants belong to the *same* non-Muslim community and on condition that that community had established a personal law code before the promulgation of Law 462. Article 7 prohibits the changing of one's religious affiliation during court proceedings. This had always been a convenient device to avoid the consequences of one's own law – e.g., if a Catholic wanted to divorce he could do so by becoming Orthodox. The exception to this rule was that conversion to Islam was permissible at all times.

Article 9 decrees that all *shari'a* judges – i.e., the judges of the Muslim personal law courts – were to be summarily transferred to the national courts. This was

10 See for instance Haddad, T. 1948, 1950 and Cassis 1948, 1950.

11 Egyptian Civil Code 1948.

12 For the text see 'Abd al-'Ati, 4.

highly odious to non-Muslims because it meant that, though non-Muslim law was still applied under the conditions stipulated in article 6, it was now administered by Muslim judges. Such a restriction had not even existed in the traditional Muslim state.

The Islamization of the legal system was perceived by the non-Muslims as a serious curtailment of their personal freedom. The abolition of the religious courts for personal law was a profound blow to the judiciary and organizational autonomy of the non-Muslim communities. It was, in effect, the final abolition of the *dhimmi* status, while it enhanced at the same time the position of Islamic law. The traditional legal separation of the non-Muslim subject was abolished without, however, creating a secular national jurisdiction which could have served as a basis for the legal integration of all Egyptian citizens regardless of religion. Though the declared concern of Law Number 462 had been a secular national one – assertion of national control over all jurisdiction and equality of all citizens before one unified law – the practical result was the expansion of the authority of the Islamic law over areas which traditionally belonged to the jurisdiction of each non-Muslim community.[13]

Summarizing, we can observe the following: the large majority of immigrants opted after World War I for Egyptian nationality. The law concerning Egyptian nationality became increasingly exclusive after World War II, putting the rights of Egyptian citizens of Syrian extraction increasingly into question. The abolition of communal jurisdiction over personal status law destroyed an essential part of communal autonomy without substituting for it greater national integration by the formulation of one unified secular law code.

The secularization of the Syrian communities in Egypt did not lead, as we have observed earlier, to any greater integration of the immigrant into Egyptian society. Nor did it lead to the creation of any integrative organizational framework for all Syrian immigrant groups. On the contrary, the different communities emerged from the process of secularization strengthened in their individual organizations. This, however, did not mean that the immigrants were completely oblivious of a common Syrian identity. For one thing, the Egyptian lawmaker took notice, to say the least, of their non-Egyptian origin; for another, Egyptian society continued to perceive all immigrants as one distinct group of common origin, and did not let them forget that they were after all *Shuwam*, Syrians. During the revolution of 1919, the lines were clearly drawn and the Syrians were not considered part of the nationalist movement. On March 10, 1919, "the offices of al-Moqattam, a Syrian, Anglophile paper, were sacked."[14] During the same period "unfortunate Syrians

13 The issue of jurisdiction over personal status has not yet been settled. A committee on which all the non-Muslim minorities were represented has formulated a unified legal code which would apply equally to all non-Muslim Egyptian citizens. This draft has been submitted to the government for consideration, but as of now it does not seem to have been decided upon.

14 Chirol, 178.

and Armenians, terrified by the rumors, deserted their shops and homes and fled into the desert for safety."[15] A contemporary observer noted that "Egyptian nationalism has of late distinctly encouraged the tendency, of which there always have been traces, to treat them (the Syrians) as foreigners and interlopers."[16]

The perception society at large has of a certain group and the self-perception of this group always interact, and there are indications that the immigrants themselves shared a common awareness of themselves as Syrians. The settlement patterns which brought Syrians of different religious backgrounds together in specific quarters of Cairo seem to confirm the existence of such a Syrian identity.[17] The similar socioeconomic status of the various Syrian communities, of course, also conditioned their choice of quarters. Yet if this were the only criterion for settlement, the Syrians could have dispersed over many more areas of the city of similar socioeconomic ranking. The common origin created a tendency to develop and maintain closer social relations with each other than the Egyptian environment.

The very similar economic interests of the different communities were, however, better served by a rapprochement with the European elements in Egypt than by the organization of an independent Syrian lobby. In sheer numbers the Syrians remained, even if united, a very small group, whose concerted action could hardly have upset the economic patterns of Egypt. Politically, after World War I, Syria and Lebanon did not even have the political pull which had allowed Greece in the nineteenth century to protect and promote the interests of its citizens in Egypt. The Syrian immigrant communities sought, therefore, closer association and identification with what can be called the local foreign bourgeoisie of Egypt.

Most revealing in this context are the patterns of intermarriage, which illustrate well the relationship of the Syrian communities to each other, to the Egyptians, and to the Europeans. The answer to the question "but would you let your daughter marry one?" was as relevant then as it is today. The following tables shed some light on the marriage patterns in the Maronite and Greek Catholic communities. Similar information for the Greek Orthodox is unfortunately not available.

Table 21: Spouses of Greek Catholic men
(percentage distribution according to religion and origin)

	Cairo 1875–84	Cairo 1885–94	Cairo 1905–14	Cairo 1941–42
total number of incidents	142	165	378	172
distribution by religion:				
Greek Catholic	73	64	66	50
Other Catholic	20	26	26	38
total Catholic	93	90	93	88

15 Elgood, 349.
16 Chirol, 158.
17 See above pp. 87–90.

Table 21 (continued):	Cairo 1875–74	Cairo 1885–94	Cairo 1905–14	Cairo 1941–42
Orthodox	7	9	6	11
other	–	1	1	1
distribution by origin:				
Syrian	84	84	85	75
Egyptian	4	5	2	4
others	12	11	13	21

Table 22: Spouses of Maronite men (percentage distribution according to religion and origin)

	Cairo 1820–45	Cairo 1875–94	Alexandria 1851–60	Alexandria 1881–90
total number of incidents	80	182	37	179
distribution by religion:				
Maronite	40	52	73	59
other Catholics	21	42	24	36
total Catholics	61	94	97	95
Orthodox	39	5	3	5
other	–	1	–	–
distribution by origin:				
Syrian	77	78	97	87
Egyptian	17	8	–	1
other	6	14	3	12

Religion and origin played an overwhelming role in the choice of spouse among Greek Catholics. At least one-half but usually more than two-thirds married within their own religious communities.

Intermarriage occurred predominantly within the Catholic Church. In both communities more than 90% married Catholics. The only exception to this pattern is Maronite men in Cairo between 1820 and 1845, probably the result of the community's small size and the limited choice of eligible Maronite girls.

In the category of "other religions", we find a few cases of Jewish or Protestant spouses. It was, of course, illegal for a Christian man to marry a Muslim woman. If such cases did occur, they evidently would not be revealed as such in the registers. Christian women could marry Muslim men, and Christian men could convert to Islam in order to marry Muslim women. In neither case would such marriages be registered in the Christian communities. At all times, however, conversion and intermarriage with Muslims seems to have been extremely rare.

Origin was almost as important a criterion as religion: Greek Orthodox women who married Greek Catholics or Maronites originated with rare exceptions from Syria, not from Greece. The somewhat impressionistic evidence from the Greek Orthodox marriage registers based on family names suggests that Greek Orthodox

men from Syria were more likely to marry Maronite or Greek Catholic women than Greek Orthodox women from Greece. This pattern indicates the persistent role the common Syrian origin played in social relations.

The main groups included in "other geographic origin" are Armenians and Latins, i.e., Roman Catholics. Most likely, many of the Armenians also came from Syria, which would increase the total number of marriages in which both partners shared the same geographic origin. Roman Catholics were usually of European extraction. In the last available data for the Greek Catholics in Cairo 1941–1942, we can observe a striking increase in the percentage of marriages with women of European extraction, reflecting the close relationship of the Syrians with the European elements in Egypt.

Most remarkable is the persistently low rate of intermarriage with Egyptians, confirming once more the small degree to which the Syrians were integrated with Egyptian society. The tendency to marry into European rather than into Egyptian circles always remained stronger. For Muslim Syrians, no marriage statistics are available but among the families which came to Egypt during the 1930's, at least, the same tendency to intermarry with European rather than with Egyptian circles seems to hold true.

The increasing association and identification of the Syrians with the Europeans in Egypt becomes eminently clear when we look at the patterns of cultural orientation and adaptation of the immigrants. The commitment of the immigrant intelligentsia to the Arab language, history, and national culture is beyond any doubt. Their contributions in this field were considerable by any measure. As late as World War I, Syrian immigrants had written major works in Arabic. Na'um Shuqair's *History of Sinai*, including a lengthy discussion of the Syrians in Egypt, was published in 1916. Ilyas Zakhura's three-volume biographical dictionary of important people in contemporary Egypt was also concluded in 1916. In 1927, he published an additional work dealing exclusively with the biographies of Syrians in Egypt. Farah Antun's last novel was published posthumously in 1923. The only major Syrian writer and thinker to pursue an active career until the 1950's in Egypt was Niqula Ilyas Haddad.

Probably the last specifically Syrian attempt to start a new periodical in Egypt was the priest Bulus Qar'ali's magazine *al-Majalla as-suriya* in 1926. It was, significantly, transferred to Lebanon four years later.[18] The same author was also the last to deal specifically with the history of the Syrians in Egypt, summarizing once more the apologetic arguments legitimizing their presence in Egypt by their beneficial contributions to the culture and economy of Egyptian society.[19] But, as his other works show, his major interest was the history of the people of Lebanon and Syria, of which the immigrants in Egypt constituted only a small part. In this, he

18 There it appeared under the name *al-Majalla al-batriyarkiya*; (Tarrazi, IV, 316).
19 Qar'ali 1928.

was much more representative of a certain intellectual trend in Lebanon during the inter-war period[20] than of the intellectual life of the Syrians in Egypt.

Al-Muqtataf and *al-Hilal* had been the leading magazines in Egypt, both run by members of the Syrian intelligentsia. A comparison of their fate after World War I illuminates well the fate of the Syrian intelligentsia in Egypt. *Al-Hilal* had been very much the one-man-show of Jurji Zaidan. Under the management of his son, however, it began to flourish after World War I. The Dar al-Hilal press expanded its activities and founded new magazines. *Al-Hilal* itself is still published today (1984), in its 92th year, and Dar al-Hilal is probably still the largest publishing house in the Arab World. Émile Zaidan accomplished this feat by converting *al-Hilal* completely into a forum for Egyptian writers and thinkers: Salama Musa, Taha Husain, Muhammad Husain Haikal, Mahmud al-'Aqqad, Ahmad Amin, and Fikri Abaza became regular contributors (the latter being on the editorial staff). *Al-Muqtataf*, in contrast, continued to rely mainly on Syrians for contributions: Shakib Arslan, Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, Sami Juraidini, and Iskandar Ma'luf were regular contributors. Many of them no longer even lived in Egypt. None of the great Egyptian literary figures wrote in *al-Muqtataf*. Its thematic orientation also indicates a preoccupation with Syrians and Syrians affairs. When Mayy Ziyada, the Syrian poetess, died in 1942, *al-Muqtataf* dedicated some 60 pages to a discussion of her life and work; *al-Hilal* did not even so much as mention her. *Al-Muqtataf* withered away and died quietly in 1951. If *al-Hilal* succeeded in surviving and survived to succeed, it was because it became a magazine written wholly by Egyptians for an Egyptian audience.[21]

Already before World War I, the immigrant Syrian intelligentsia had come to the realization that politically their integration with Egyptian society would not be feasible. At the eve of the war, their political orientation and concern were already directed toward Syria, and many left for Syria after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In Egypt herself, a new and rising indigenous intelligentsia took over from the Syrians – in the administration, which was less and less under direct British control, in the press, and in the general cultural life of Egypt. The events of March 1919 only confirmed what the Syrian intelligentsia had grasped already a decade earlier: Syrians would not be considered part of Egyptian society.

While the immigrant intelligentsia vanished from the Egyptian scene after World War I, the Syrian communities in general, led by the commercial bourgeoisie, remained. But they took a very different cultural road. The secularization of life in these communities, combined with an unwillingness and/or inability to join the secular Arab national society in either its Egyptian or its Syrian variation, led to a

20 Qustantin al-Basha with his many historical works and editions of historical mss. is another example of this trend.

21 Issawi, 190, observes that in the 1940's the large newspapers were still owned by Syrians but that the staff and the writers were Egyptian. The Syrian owners were careful not to give their papers a communal or denominational tone which might distinguish them from other Egyptian newspapers.

growing affinity with European, in particular French, culture and language. In this way, legal and organizational separation from Egyptian society was culturally and socially reinforced while creating, at the same time, closer ties with the local foreign bourgeoisie.

Typically, second- or third-generation immigrants expressed themselves – if at all inclined toward the literary – in French. When a descendent of the Bahri family wrote the history of his ancestors, he did so in French.[22] Of the author Jeanne Arqash, daughter of an immigrant, Taha Husain said that "she was an Egyptian patriot and her sentiments were Egyptian but her language was French, as were her imagery and thought."[23] A descendent of the Kahil family, Alexander Ibn Yusuf Kahil (d. 1940 in Cairo), had studied philosophy at the Sorbonne and written a drama in French called "Le Don Juan".[24]

If at the beginning of the nineteenth century Syrian immigrants had translated Volney's *Ruines* into Arabic, they translated Jabarti into French at the end of the century.[25] The trend toward French as the major language of expression accelerated after World War I. The first periodical of the Greek Catholic community, *Le Lien*, which started in 1935, appeared in French. Ironically, the Greek Orthodox community in Alexandria shifted from Arabic to French for its annual reports only a few years after it had changed its name from "Syrian" to "Egyptian Orthodox Community". Polemic pamphlets, such as Sékaly's defense of Syrian Greek Orthodox rights in 1920, or the anonymous attack on the Greek Catholic order in Mansura in 1922, were written in French.

From the 1920's, the French-speaking press in Cairo employed many Syrians, who, however, had no active or independent role any more:

> La presse française est, en verité, syrienne ou juive. Le rédaction occupe bien quelques Français ... mais l'élément étranger domine largement ... Il est évident que la situation des colonies étrangères en Égypte ne leur permet pas de s'occuper de politique et de chercher à s'ingérer par des campagnes de presse dans les directives nationales. En fait derrière chaque journal français s'agite un parti politique égyptien.[26]

French influence was not restricted to literary or intellectual activities alone. It was a trend that encompassed all aspects of the life of the communities, as can be seen from the changing taste in names appearing in the baptism registers. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, typical Arab Christian names such as Mikha'il, Jibra'il, Butrus, Dawud, Rufa'il, and Ilyas were the most common. At the end of

22 Bahri, 1972.

23 Badr, 330.

24 *Le Lien*, V (1940), 370–372.

25 al-Jabarti's *'Aja'ib al-athar fi 't-tarajim wa'l-akhbar* was translated with the title *Merveilles biographiques et historiques, ou chroniques du Cheikh Abd-el-Rahman el-Djabarti* in 1888–1896, 9 vols. The translators were Shafiq Mansur, 'Abd al-'Aziz Kahil, Jibra'il Niqula Kahil, and Iskandar 'Ammun. The translation is very deficient, but remains the only complete translation of Jabarti into French.

26 Carnoy, 160.

the century, we find an increasing use of such names as Edouard, Raymond, Emile, Michel (in Arabic transliteration!), Pierre, Gaston, etc. During the latter period, we can also observe the increasing use of Latin letters for signatures under marriage contracts, testaments, etc. After World War I, whole procès-verbaux were recorded in French rather than in Arabic. The de-Arabization of the Syrian immigrants became a comprehensive and far-reaching process.

Cultural identities are usually well reflected in the educational orientations a society encourages. The educational politics of the Syrian communities were no exception. In general, they strongly reinforced the trend toward French acculturation. The first impression one gains from a look at communal education in the nineteenth century is the neglect from which it suffered. Compared with the educational efforts of the various communities in Syria/Lebanon, or the Greek community in Egypt, the Syrian immigrants showed little concern for the education of their youth.

The first school to be founded was the Greek Orthodox school al-'Ubaidiya in 1860, which, however, soon served the Greek rather than the Syrian community. The Greek Catholic community set up a committee in 1863 for the creation of a communal school in Cairo.[27] Two small schools, one in Shubra, one in al-Azbakiya, were founded in 1872 and 1873 respectively. They were run by priests, Arabic presumably being the language of instruction. In 1882, the welfare organization took over the management of these two shools. By 1889 the two schools together had some 150 students, of which 80 were paying students, while the rest received scholarships from the welfare organization. When the Jesuits opened their Collège de la Sainte Famille in Fajjala, in the same year, most paying students transferred to this institution. The welfare organization lost interest in the further management of the two communal schools and control over them reverted to the priests who were teaching there.[28] The welfare organization continued to provide scholarships for poor students. But the quality of the communal schools deteriorated, and in 1894 the one in Shubra was dissolved. The students with scholarships were transferred to the school of the Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes in Shubra. Much-needed support for the other communal school was not forthcoming from the welfare organization. A further effort was made in 1907 with the establishment of the Patriarchal School in Fajjala, aided by a donation of land from the Sidnawi family and by regular support paid by the welfare organization, which transferred to it all students with stipends. The language of instruction was French, but Arabic was also taught. From 1925, the school prepared students for the primary and secondary certificate issued by the Egyptian ministry of public education. In 1926, the welfare organization set up a separate school for needy students, since *"le mélange entre élèves payants et les boursiers de la Société de Bienfaisance étant un sérieux obstacle à de plus grands développements"*. Only in 1942 did this school prepare its students for the Egyptian

27 *Daftar rasa'il ila dawa'ir al-hukuma 1860–1868*, April 1864 (Greek Catholic Archives, Cairo).
28 *'Id al-khamsin*, 17, 25.

primary school certificate.[29] During the same years, the welfare organization also continued to give stipends to those needy students who attended other schools.

The question of girls' education had been discussed since 1907. Two years later, the welfare organization charged Les Soeurs de la Charité de Besançon with the establishment of a school which provided vocational training and later also prepared for the French certificat and brevet. In the schools actually run directly by the community, French became the major language of instruction. Similarily, the Maronite Patriarchal School used French. The Syrian Greek Orthodox school in Alexandria was bilingual, while the school in Cairo had used French since its establishment in 1916 and continued to do so until the 1952 revolution.

For the year 1927, the French consulate listed 63 schools in Cairo and surroundings in which French was the language of instruction. Of a total of 22,358 students 3,215 were "Syrian". However, barely one-fourth of the latter attended the schools of their respective communities.[30] In other French schools, Syrians constituted only part of the student population, which reflected the ethnic and religious mixture of the local foreign bourgeoisie.[31]

The government census of 1937 provides us with the following picture of the distribution of students by religion in government and other schools:

Table 23:[32] *Pupils' distribution by religion (percentages)*

	Muslim	Copt	Greek Orthodox	Catholic	Jewish
schools:					
Egyptian	99.8	80	13	5	59
English			3	3.6	3.8
French			20	54	29
Italian			2	30	7
Greek			56		
others			6	7	1
	100	100	100	100	100
total numbers	1.4 mill.	113,220	20,941	16,781	14,292

Though the statistic does not differentiate between Maronites, Greek Catholics, and other Catholics, or between Greek Orthodox of Syrian and Greek origin, it still permits us to draw some conclusions concerning the educational program of the various communities. The vast majority of all Egyptian (Muslim and, to a lesser

29 *Le Lien*, Almanach 1942, 82, 87.

30 Carnoy, 108–111. This calculation includes 420 Syrian girls – out of a total of 860 – in the school of the Soeurs de la Charité de Besançon. Though the school was initiated by the Greek Catholic community it was not really under its supervision, and should perhaps therefore not be counted as a community school.

31 Though we are lacking the statistical evidence, we can assume that also British and Italian schools were attended by Syrians, if probably in smaller numbers.

32 *Annuaire statistique 1942–1943.*

degree, Coptic) students attended Egyptian schools. In striking contrast to this pattern stands the preference of the other religious communities for foreign or communal schools. The high percentage of Jewish students in government schools may be misleading. In fact, it shows that the Jewish community was not relying on foreign schools but on a communal effort for building an educational system. Because of its local character, it came under the inspection of the Egyptian government.[33] The Greek Orthodox community – of which roughly 90% were Greek-speaking – displayed a similar interest in independent communal education by supporting so many Greek national schools. In both communities, more than half of all pupils went to schools of their own community. The distribution of Greek Orthodox students of Syrian origin cannot be determined from the above data.

Catholics distinguished themselves by their heavy reliance on foreign schools. Assuming that most Italian students went to Italian schools, the Maronite and Greek Catholic students must have been heavily concentrated in the French schools – i.e., the effort to build a local communal system of education was weakest among these two groups.

Again, no statistical material is available for Muslim Syrians. But the majority of those families who immigrated during the 1930's sent their children to foreign schools and frequently abroad for professional training.

At a time when the Syrian communities moved toward complete cultural de-Arabization, the Egyptian law-maker began to slowly but surely tighten control over private schools and to enforce a gradual Egyptianization of their programms.

As was the case of the laws concerning personal status and citizenship, the process of Egyptianization began long before the 1952 revolution. The first attempt to regulate private schools was the Law Number 40 of 1934, a rather innocuous law dealing mainly with technical regulations concerning health, buildings, etc. Article 7 states that private schools should follow the program of instruction instituted by the government. However, specific contents of this program were not mentioned, nor was the question of government inspection and examinations discussed.

The regulations of Law Number 38 of 1938, coming a year after the Montreux agreement abolishing the capitulary privileges of foreigners in Egypt, was already much more specific. Article 1 stated categorically that all private schools were subject to control and inspection by the ministry of public education. Article 11 demanded that even private schools which were not preparing their students for the government examination and certificate had to assure a proper knowledge of Arabic, and Egyptian history and geography for those students who had Egyptian citizenship. The Law Number 583 of 1955 emphasized the level of Arabic teaching in private schools (article 18) and made examination in Arabic and Egyptian history

33 *Annuaire des juifs*, 178–182, 218/219. *"Le gouvernement égyptien continue à surveiller très minutieusement notre groupement scholaire sur la base du programme égyptien du gouvernement où la langue principale est l'arabe et cela, tout en maintenant l'étude du français d'une manière complète"* (ibid., 186).

and geography obligatory for all schools, including those private schools which did not follow the official plan of instruction (article 19). "Patriotic education" had to be equal to that in government schools and textbooks had to be approved by the government (article 20).

Three years later, Law Number 160 of 1958 added to these regulations that all private schools had to follow the government plan of instruction (article 18) and that all local and foreign students would be examined in the subjects of Arabic language, history, and geography (article 19). The director of the school had to be an Arab (article 4) and foreign teachers could be hired only with the consent of the Ministry of Education (article 51). Financial subsidies of foreign origin had to be approved by the government.

The complementary developments of increased government control and Egyptianization of the program of instruction made it increasingly difficult for foreign schools to maintain their cultural independence.

The educational policies of the Syrian communities had reflected and increased their cultural alienation from their Egyptian, Arabic-speaking environment. By relying on foreign, and especially French, education the Syrians had also attempted to maintain culturally a distance from Egyptian society. Their cultural de-Arabization moved them into ever greater identification with the foreign elements in Egypt.

At the same time, the Egyptian state, after gaining nominal independence in 1922, progressively asserted sovereignty over its legal, economic, and cultural affairs. As the role and the privileges of the foreign local bourgeoisie were systematically reduced after the treaty of 1936, so the position of the Syrian communities, emphasizing their non-integration with Egyptian society, became increasingly precarious. Ironically, Syrians were more vulnerable than foreigners, since they were Egyptian citizens, unable to count on protection from a foreign country.

The legal developments concerning personal status law and citizenship and the process of the Egyptianization of education reached their peak at a time when the Syrians, despite having lived for generations in Egypt, considered themselves culturally and socially less than ever as Egyptians and hardly any more as Arabs. Their position had become as untenable as that of the European communities in Egypt. The destruction of their wealth in 1961–1962 provided a final motive for the Syrians to physically leave the country from which they had separated culturally already a generation earlier.

CONCLUSION

The Syrian migration to Egypt in the 18th century was one of the first signs of the new forces and changes which were heralding the gradual breakdown of traditional society in the Middle East. During the 18th century Syria was exposed, earlier than other areas in the Middle East, to profound changes which drew it inexorably into the European economic sphere. The two major developments were the weakening of central Ottoman control over the Arab provinces and the shift of the economic center of gravity in Syria from Aleppo and Damascus to the coastal towns. This change was caused by a shift from international trade carried *through* Syria to an international trade based on exportation of local cash-crops *from* Syria to Europe. This emphasis on local production also provided the autonomy-minded local rulers with a financial basis for their rule.

These changing conditions gave local Christians in Damascus and Aleppo a chance to buttress the base of their own socioeconomic rise, which was occurring at the same time. For all practical purposes, a commercial bourgeoisie was developing in Damascus and Aleppo as a new local class. As local people, they were well suited to provide the connection between the primary producer in Syria and the French trade. In contrast to Jewish and Armenian merchants, they had neither vested interests in earlier European trade connections (e.g., the English and the Venetians) nor support from or influence in Istanbul. As local Christians whose rising prosperity and education made them desirous of managing their own affairs, they benefited from the weakness of the central government and challenged the authority of their Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul. This challenge found its formal expression in the adherence to the Catholic rather than to the Orthodox church.

How much the rise of the Greek Catholics was a departure from traditional patterns of society and culture can perhaps be best appreciated by considering the great number of Greek Catholics who later participated actively in the Arab *nahda*. A first sign of a new intellectual and cultural expression carried by this rising new class of local merchants is visible in the historical writings of Mikha'il as-Sabbagh, Ibrahim al-'Aura, Niqula Turk, and Mikha'il Mishaqa. All were Greek Catholics; all were the sons and grandsons of merchants and administrators who combined a certain sense of material well-being with education. The histories they wrote differed from traditional historiography in that they contained strong autobiographical elements and a perception of the local impact of world history. Their histories reflected a new appreciation of the individual's role in this world as well as a new awareness of the relations between global history and local Middle Eastern developments. Self-confident in their new positions as administrators, familiar with the

world through their trade relations, a new commercial bourgeoisie was reflecting its non-traditional world view.

Yet, in the end, the Greek Catholics more closely resembled any other religious minority within the traditional patterns of society rather than a new social class. Their self-definition in terms of religion and their physical dispersal along the Mediterranean coasts of Egypt and Syria defined their status as a de facto if not de jure minority. This situation had its advantages. The Greek Catholics could fulfill the traditional functions of minorities in banking and politics for local rulers. They were also able to build up their own ethnic trading network, which was quite sufficient to cope with the new conditions of international trade in the 18th century. The Greek Catholics, attracted by the new economy, migrated to the Syrian coastlands and went on to Egypt, following the traditional trade route between these two countries. At the Syrian coast and in Egypt they were also ensured protection from Greek Orthodox persecution, which could not reach them where the power of the Ottoman government was weak.

Zahir al-'Umar was the first local ruler to employ the Greek Catholics on a large scale. His own power rested on the weakness of the Ottoman central government and on the conversion of subsistence agriculture in his dominion into a cash-crop export economy. Though his rule was financed by the integration of the area into the modern world economy, the patterns of his rule remained traditional. He employed Greek Catholics as bankers, counselors, and merchants in the traditional way and for the traditional reasons. This held even more true for Egypt during 'Ali Bey al-Kabir's rule, where only the loss of Ottoman power was felt, while the European economic expansion had not yet left its mark. The rise to power of the Syrians in Egypt did not signal the beginning of a new era of economic domination by Europe but simply meant the replacement – for reasons of internal and personal politics – of one minority, the Jews, by another, the Syrian Christians, without a change in functions or social structure.

The political significance of this shift – and part of the reason for the Greek Catholics' success – was the fact that they were or soon became a local minority, "local" in the sense that their economic interests were bound to the export of the local cash-crops and coastal trade between Syria and Egypt which initially brought them to that country; "local" also in the sense that their spread extended only to the southeastern Mediterranean coast. The Jews and Armenians were dispersed over the whole Ottoman Empire and beyond. They were interested in the older form of international trade and, having access to the government in Istanbul, could lobby for their interests there. In contrast to these minorities, the Greek Catholics were not an "Ottoman minority" but a provincial Arab one. They sided with the localist interests and the provincial centers of power and were supported by them.

From a European point of view, the extraction of raw materials from southwest Syria can indeed be seen as the beginning of a new relationship with the Middle East. The local response to this challenge and to the simultaneous decay of central power in the empire nevertheless still assumed traditional forms in the 18th century.

We can observe variations on traditional patterns – the re-emergence of local autonomy or the rise of new minorities – but it would be premature to speak of a break with traditional patterns. Ironically, even the Greek Catholics – whose genesis and early rise strongly suggested the development of a new Arabic-speaking indigenous bourgeoisie, and whose migration was largely motivated by the changing economy in Syria – conformed at the end of the 18th century to the traditional patterns of minorities in the Ottoman Empire.

Conventional wisdom has it that the reign of Muhammad 'Ali constituted the initiation of modern times in Egypt. This has been so routinely accepted as the turning-point in Egyptian history that Syrians in Egypt themselves frequently perceive his rule as the beginning of their own history in Egypt when, in fact, they had already lived there for a century. To equate the rule of Muhammad 'Ali with 'modernity' is questionable or at least a simplification. As for the Syrians, their fate was determined by new as well as traditional factors: The drastic increase in the Egyptian trade with Europe found them unprepared. They had neither the capital (especially after their financial losses under the French occupation) nor the direct access to European (especially English) markets to play an independent role in this trade. The centralization of administration and the monopolization of the Egyptian economy also destroyed their influential economic role as the more or less autonomous managers of the Egyptian customs. In addition, for a variety of reasons, they lost the direct access to the ruler, which was traditionally decisive for a minority's economic and political success. The Greek Catholics, therefore, did not share even the success the Greeks and Armenians enjoyed under the rule of Muhammad 'Ali.

At the same time, though, the Syrian Christian communities in Egypt – foremost the Greek Catholics but also the Maronites and later yet the Syrian Greek Orthodox – were able to consolidate their communal structures and religious identities. The indifference of Muhammad 'Ali resulted in greater freedom for communal organization. The Ottoman legislation of the 1840's legitimized the leadership of the clergy in these communities. Intended to emancipate minorities in the Ottoman Empire, this legislation actually reemphasized their separateness from the rest of society. In Egypt it confirmed the independent organization of each Syrian community under its respective clergy, preventing an organizational fusion of all immigrants and reinforcing the social distance between these communities and Egyptian society.

Before World War I, the immigrant intelligentsia played an important role in Egypt's cultural and intellectual life. They set out to transcend the narrow confines of communal identity and loyalty. Denying the importance of religious affiliation, they attempted to forge a new secular nationalist basis for an all-encompassing social integration; hence their preoccupation with Arabic culture, literature, and history. The positions they occupied in the Egyptian press, education, administration, etc. could be legitimized only by an identification with the nation-state. But it was precisely secular nationalism which eventually made the immigrant intelligentsia unacceptable to Egyptian society. Regardless of their religious background,

the immigrants were now all perceived as Syrians and outsiders in the Egyptian nation. The rising indigenous intelligentsia successfully challenged the hold the immigrant intelligentsia had on positions in the press and the administration to which educated Egyptians were now aspiring. As a result, the first Syrian organizations developed in Egypt at the eve of World War I. In these organizations, Syrian Muslims and Christians of various denominations collaborated on the basis of their common origin and their newly awakened common concern for the fate of Syria herself. The Syrian nationalism of the immigrant intelligentsia grew even as the Egyptian nationalism took a more articulate form. Its torch-bearers, the Egyptian intelligentsia, displaced the Syrians from their positions in Egypt while the latter found themselves increasingly preoccupied with Syrian affairs. After World War I, the last traces of the Syrian role in the cultural and intellectual life of Egypt faded away.

The Syrian commercial bourgeoisie had no use for the nationalism of the intelligentsia, neither in its Syrian nor in its Egyptian variation. The bourgeoisie had not regained the controlling position in the Egyptian economy which they had possessed a century earlier, yet they were able to adapt to the changing economic conditions of Egypt and to prosper materially right up to their expropriation in 1961–1962. To ensure the success of their commercial activities, the Syrian commercial bourgeoisie were in need of close collaboration with the European elements in Egypt rather than nationalist programs. For the bourgeoisie, the organizational framework of the communities could still fulfill an important, though changing, function. During the 18th century, the Greek Catholic communal identity and organization had served as an ethnic trading network. The leaders of the community in Egypt had been the rich merchants. As the Greek Catholics increasingly acquired the character of a traditional religious minority, rather than that of a new commercial class, and as indeed their economic importance began to recede by the end of the 18th century, the clericalization of the community's leadership gained ground and was eventually legitimized by the Ottoman decrees of the 1840's.

The secularization of the various Syrian communities in Egypt after the 1870's did not lead to their dissolution but to a reinterpretation of their role. The functions of an ethnic trading network had by then become largely obsolete. But under the secular leadership of the commercial bourgeoisie and by means of welfare societies providing education, subsidies, health care, etc. for the poorer members a patron-client system was established in each community. Under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, communities often succeeded in redefining their functions and reorganizing their communal structures, emerging from the process of secularization with a strengthened internal organization and a new sense of communal loyalty, while having simultaneously reduced the power of the clergy and the strength of the religious identity.

Adherence to the communal identity also helped to set the Syrian commercial bourgeoisie apart from its Egyptian environment and to draw it closer to the foreign elements in Egypt. A close alliance with the local foreign bourgeoisie was essential

for the Syrians' own commercial success. Secularization of the communities led neither to their dissolution nor to the adoption of a national – be it Egyptian or Syrian – identity. Ironically, it led to the Syrians' acculturation into the local foreign – mainly francophone – bourgeoisie.

The irony lies in the fact that a group whose members had contributed vigorously to the cultural and intellectual revival in the Arab world – as for instance the Greek Catholic historians at the beginning of the 19th century or the Syrian intelligentsia in Egypt later – was in the end unable to identify itself with the new national society. Doubly alienated in Egypt by religion and by origin, and increasingly drawn to the local foreign bourgeoisie for economic reasons, the Christian Syrians in Egypt in the 20th century underwent a process of complete de-Arabization. It was the cultural and social alienation much more than the material losses themselves which determined the reaction of the Syrians to the expropriation of their businesses in Egypt in 1961–1962 and led to their departure from Egypt.

The Syrian immigrants had been among the first to respond to the changes which were heralding the eventual breakdown of traditional society. Their initial success in sensing these changes in Syria and adapting to them in Egypt was not based on a unilineal and uniform transformation to "modernity". Frequently, variations of traditional patterns – such as can be identified in the continuity and transformation of community structures – seemed to succeed most satisfactorily in coping with the new social and political conditions. Thus the distance between the Syrian immigrants and Egyptian society was maintained. In fact, it grew as the Egyptian nation-state became more articulate in its demand for sovereignty and authority over its citizens and the Syrian communities became more restive about surrendering their traditional autonomy. A conscious effort to transcend the confines of communal identity through secular nationalism did not necessarily lead to integration either. Nationalist identities could also be divisive and make the Syrian immigrant, as Syrian, unacceptable in the national Egyptian society.

Ethnic and cultural minorities existed throughout the history of the Muslim Middle East. Religious minorities constituted by Christians or Jews were legitimized by Islam and clearly defined in their form and function. Other minorities based on differing ethnic communality or on sectarian divisions within Islam did not enjoy the benefits – and burdens – of legal recognition, and their shape and roles in society were of a much more fluid character.

Since the end of the 19th century secularists and nationalists in the Middle East strove for the transformation of the Ottoman Empire, based as it was on the dominance and unity of the Muslim community, into territorially defined nation states. As we observed at the beginning of this study, it had been an underlying assumption of their thinking that this transformation would lead to truly integrated societies in which religious differences would play no divisive role anymore.

It was perhaps to be expected that the advent of nationalism in the Middle East should have been accompanied by the creation of new – national – minorities. This occurred where latent ethnic-linguistic or historical differentiations were politi-

cized without finding an adequate political realization. The Kurdish people are the most obvious example for this development. But also various populations in border areas fall into this category. In a certain sense the Palestinian refugees in other Arab countries belong to this group, too.

It is more surprising to find that also groups which were defined by their religious identity frequently maintained or even strengthened their separate existence. This is especially remarkable when such groups themselves – as was the case with the Syrians in Egypt – underwent a process of secularization. We can observe here a vertical social integration which merges individuals of different socio-economic background into specific ethnic or religious communities which exist next to each other with more or less autonomy. This study has analysed the persistence of vertical integration over horizontal integration, in which members of different communities are absorbed into the existing strata of the surrounding society.

We cannot explain this phenomenon by searching for rigid adherence to outdated traditions, but we must understand the ability of traditional organizational patterns to change and to adapt and to fulfill new functions for the members of the community which the state or society at large either cannot or will not fulfill.

It could be argued that the case of the Syrians in Egypt was an extreme one: communal separateness was accentuated by immigrant status. Not all minorities in the Middle East migrated, not all lost their linguistic-cultural link with their social environment. Many tried to identify with larger social and national entities. Many of the religious minorities underwent the same process of secularization as society at large. Yet, we can still identify everywhere the traditional minority communities. More than that, such communities display today often rather greater organizational strength and coherence than formerly. It is not necessary to look to Lebanon to find proof for this observation. The radicalized situation of Lebanon today is a case in its own and certainly not representative of social integration or its absence in the Middle Eastern societies. But from the Alawis in Syria to the Copts in Egypt we encounter today surprising and often even reinvigorated communal coherence and identification, which serves as a basis for political action.

The main themes of the history of the Syrians in Egypt are those of continuity, transformation, and possible dissolution of communities under changing economic and social conditions; the tensions between traditional religious and recent secular identities; and the relations between the traditional autonomy of communities and the emerging claim to authority by the nation-state. Because we are dealing in addition with a situation of migration, these issues in all their complexity were articulated earlier and more strongly than was the case under more stationary conditions.

The persistence of the Syrians' traditional communal identities and the adaptive powers of their organizational structures were – with the rise of the nation-state in Egypt – compounded by the fact of the Syrians' foreign origin and their later cultural alienation in the widest sense. In spite of their presence in Egypt for several generations, Syrian immigrants had to become emigrants once more.

APPENDICES

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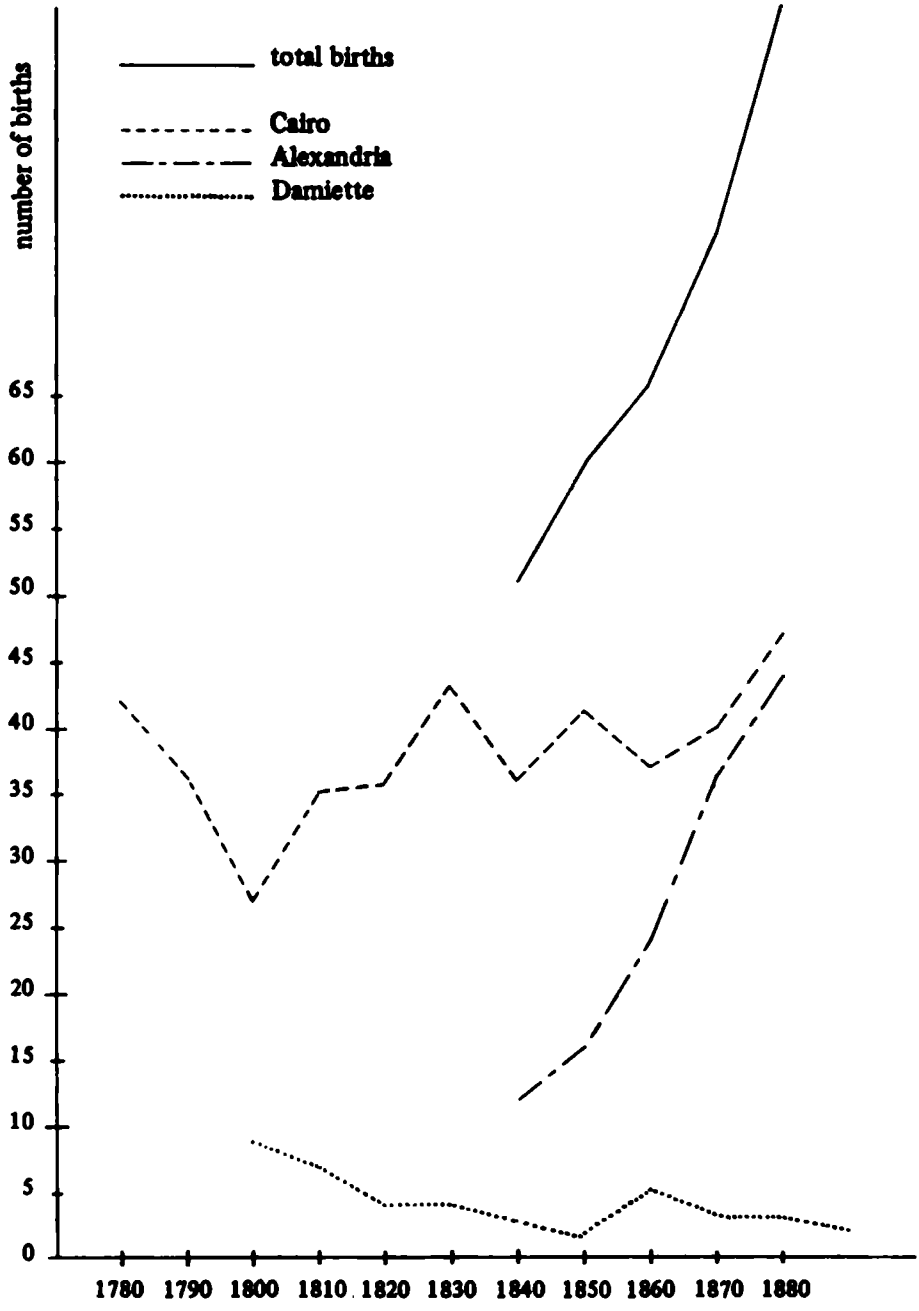
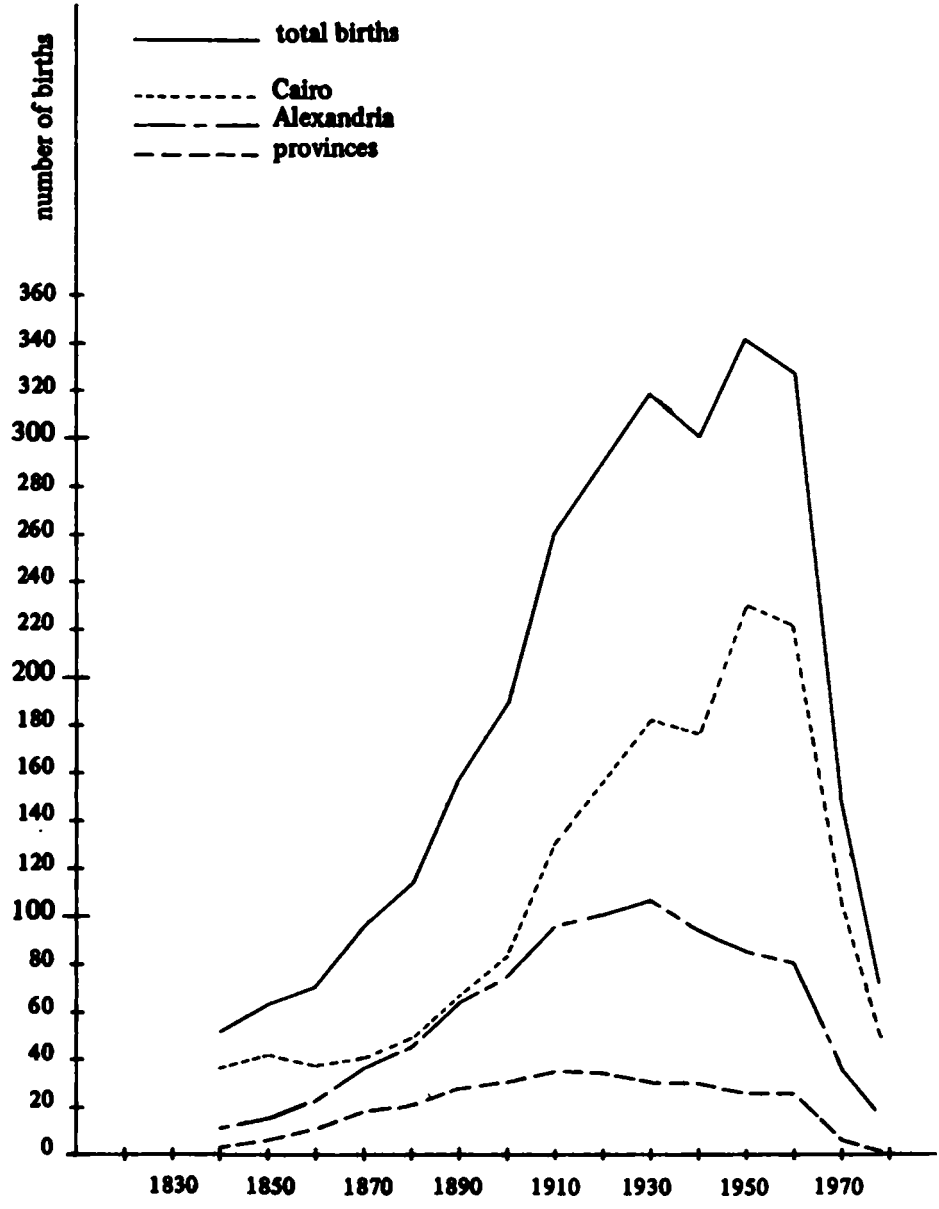
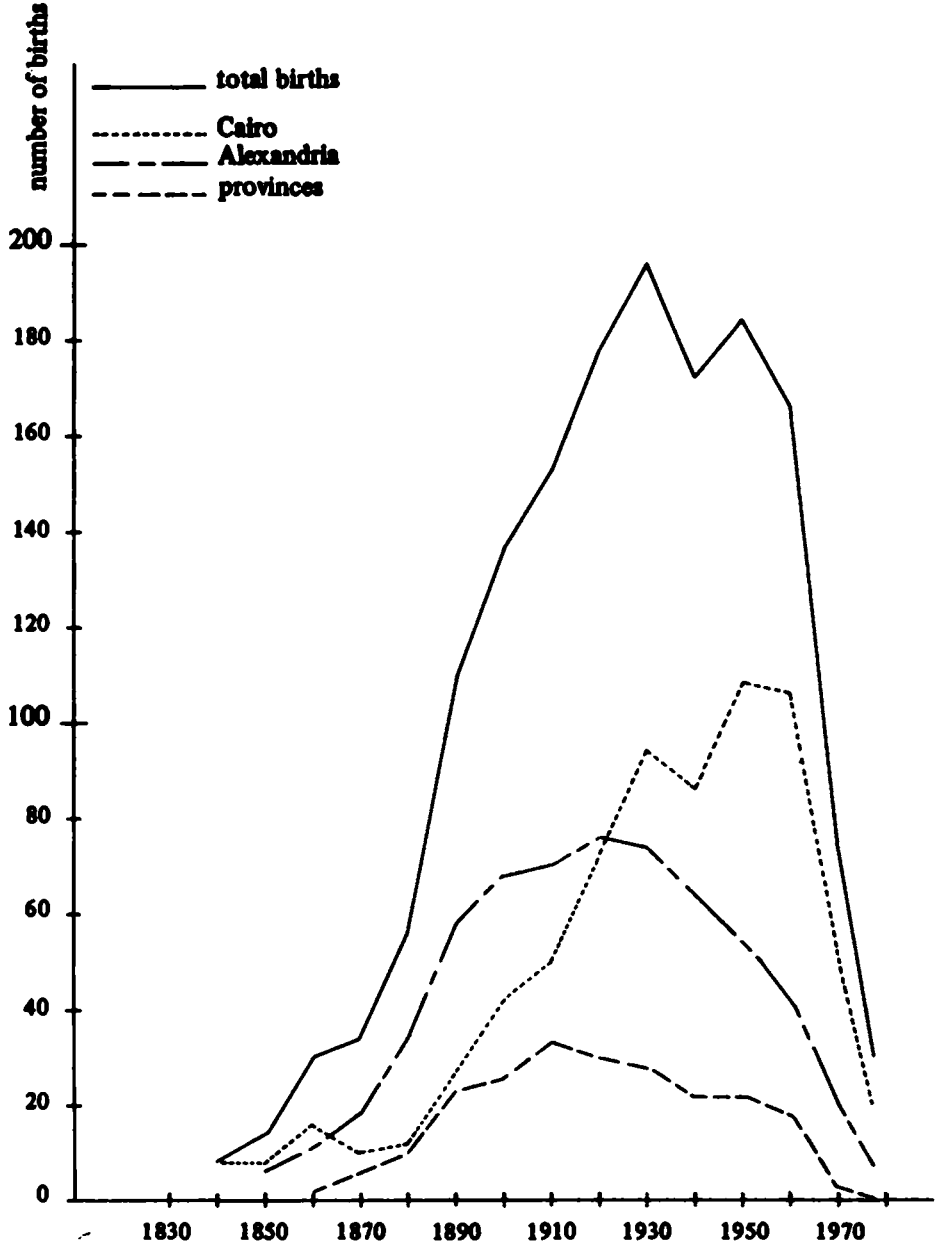
Births in Egypt to Greek Catholics 1780–1880

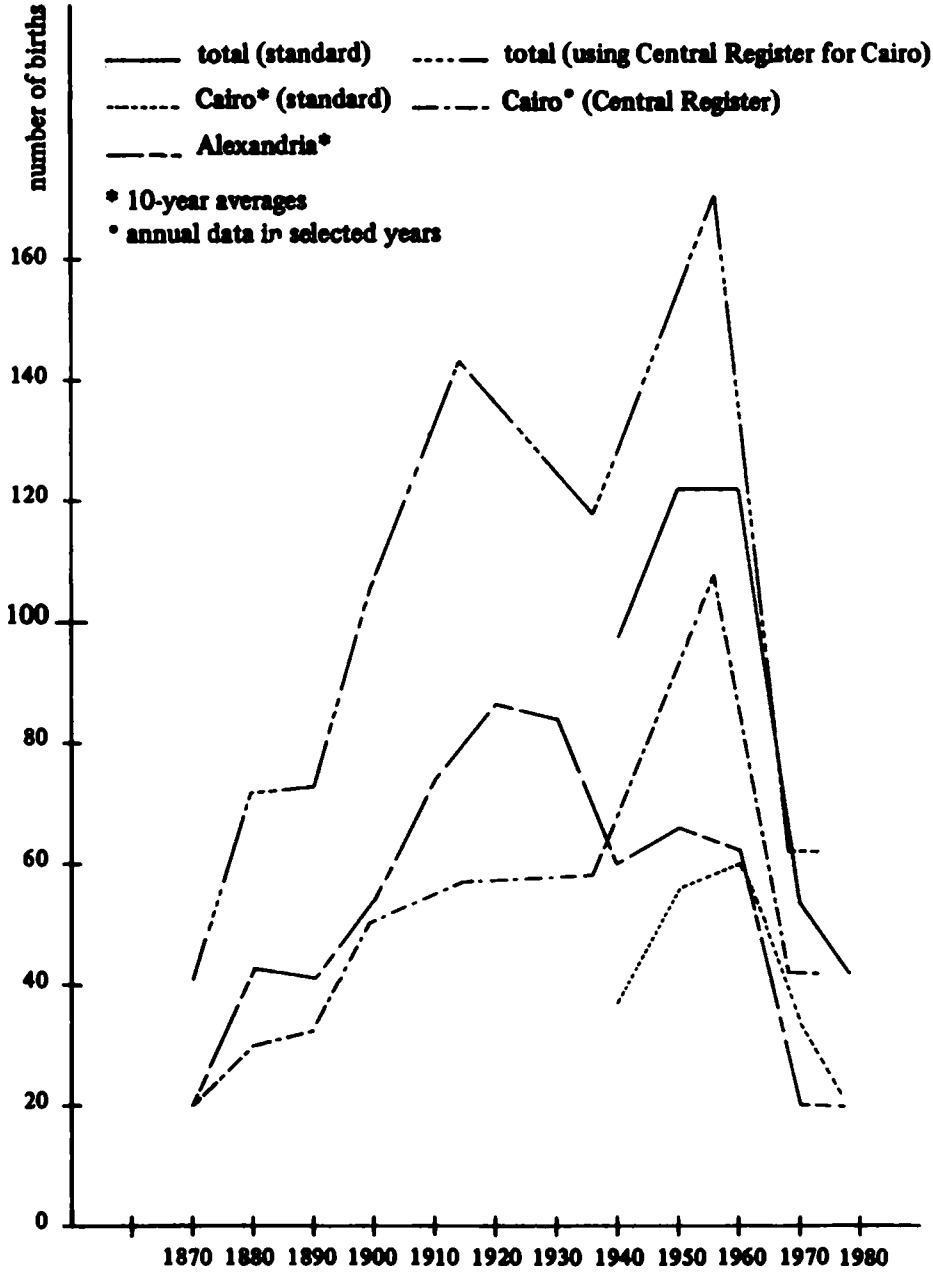


Births in Egypt to Greek Catholics 1840–1980

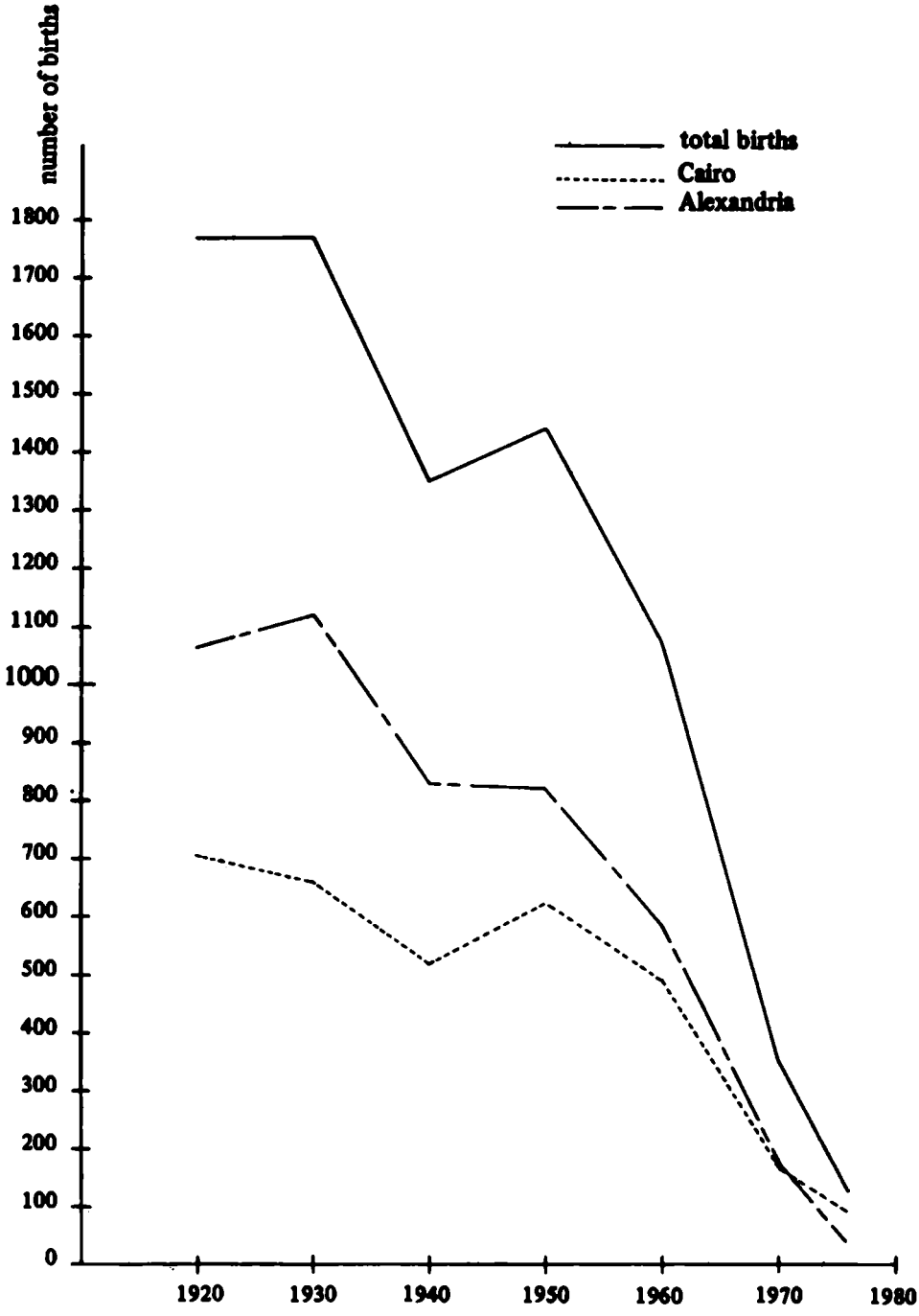



number of births
total births
Cairo
Alexandria
provinces
200
180
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
1830
1850
1870
1890
1910
1930
1950
1970

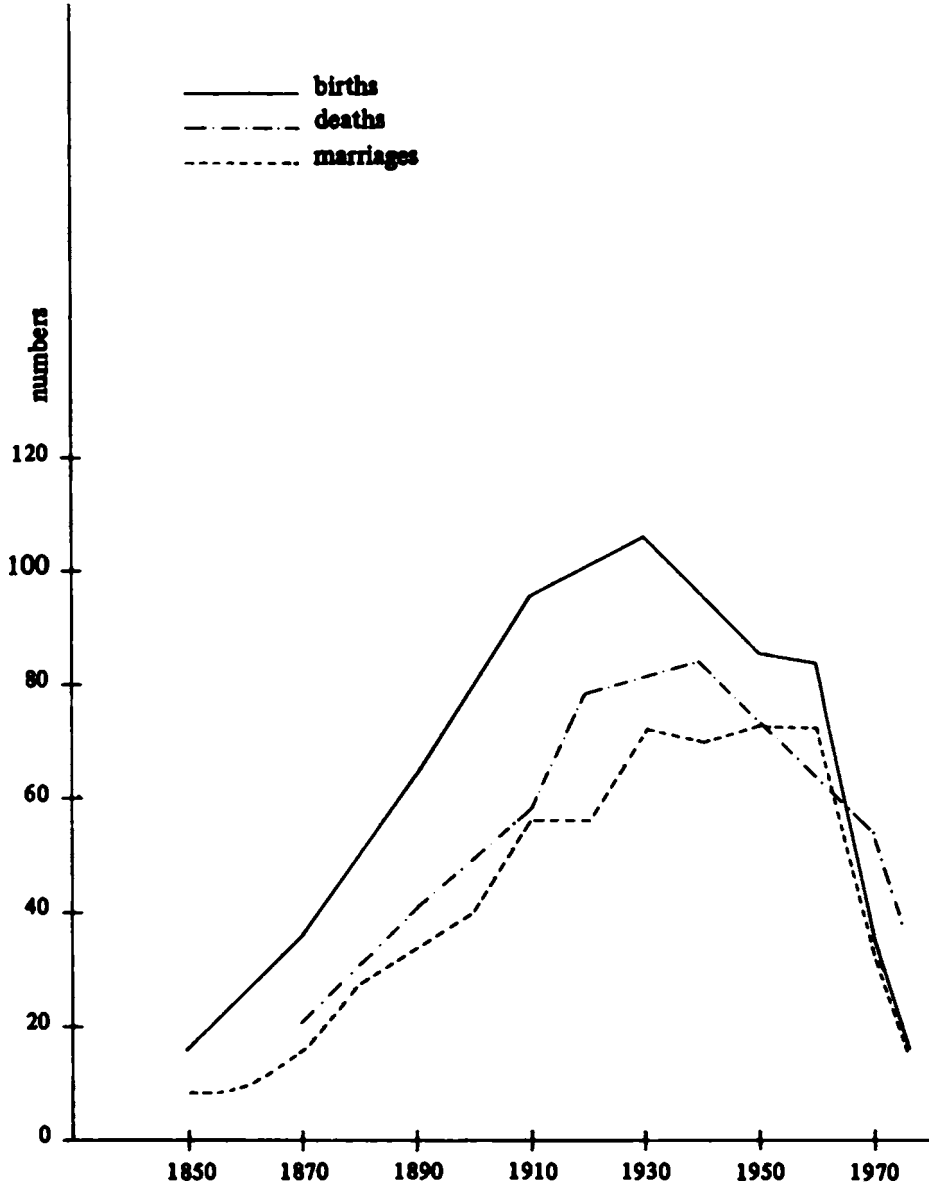
Births in Egypt to Greek Orhodox Syrians 1870–1980



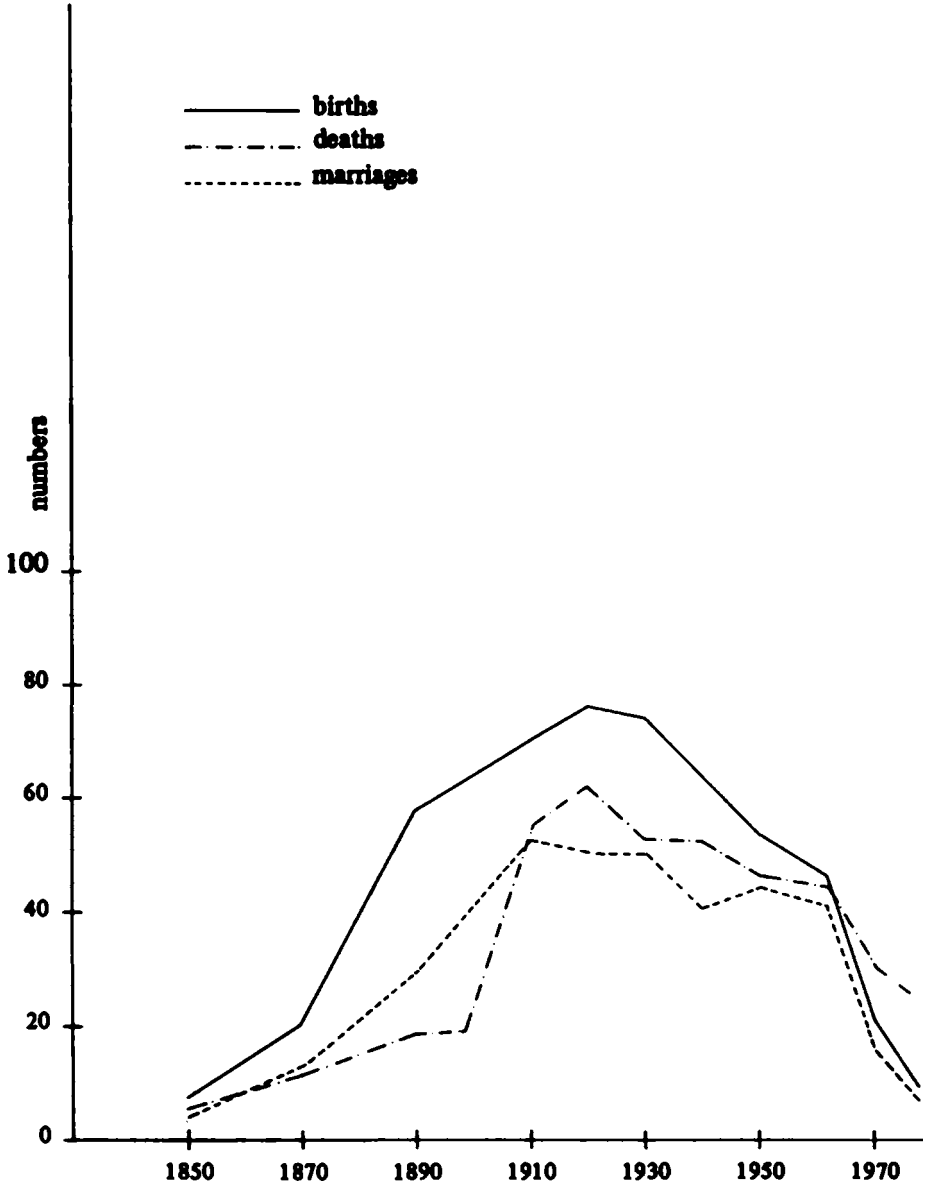
Total Greek Orthodox births in Egypt 1920–1980
(including Greeks and Syrians)



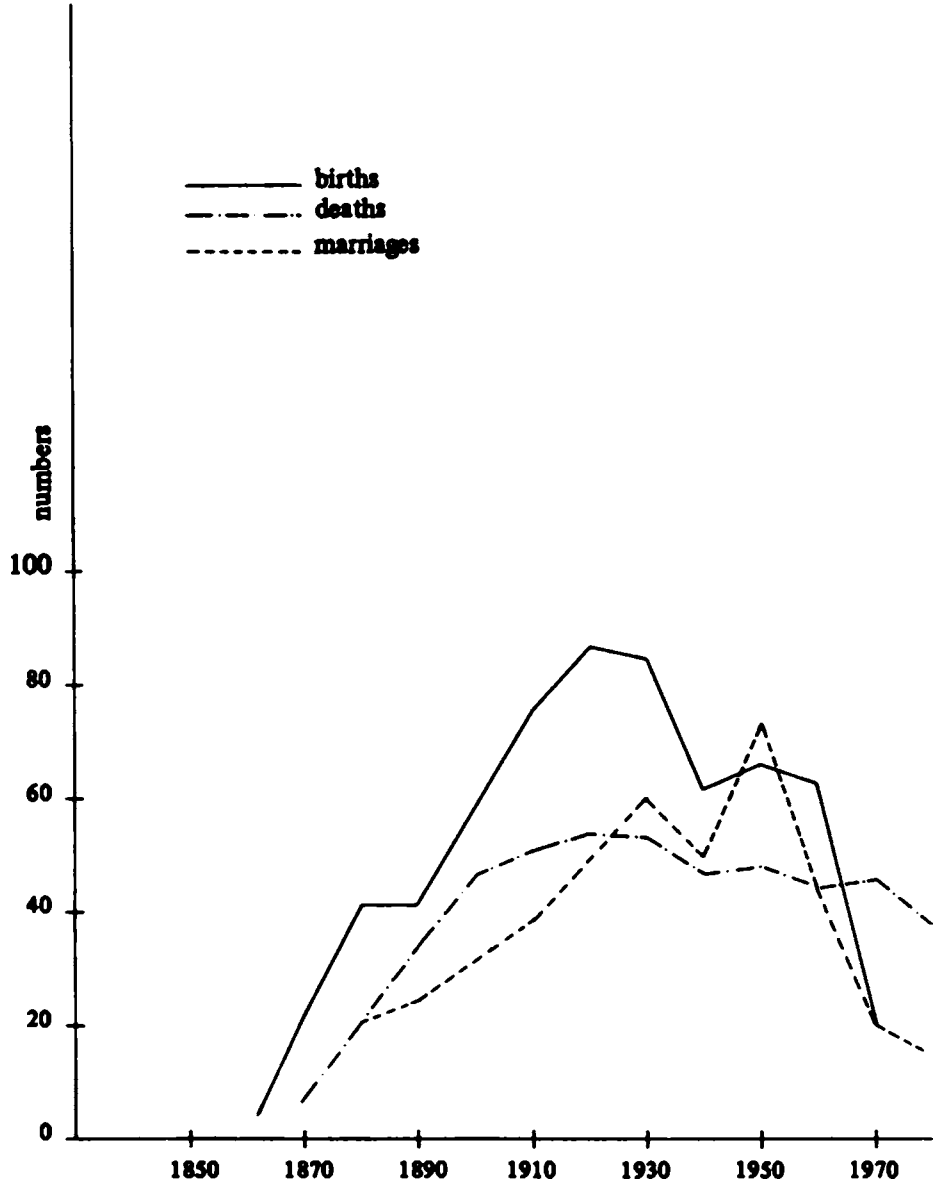
Alexandria: Greek Catholic community



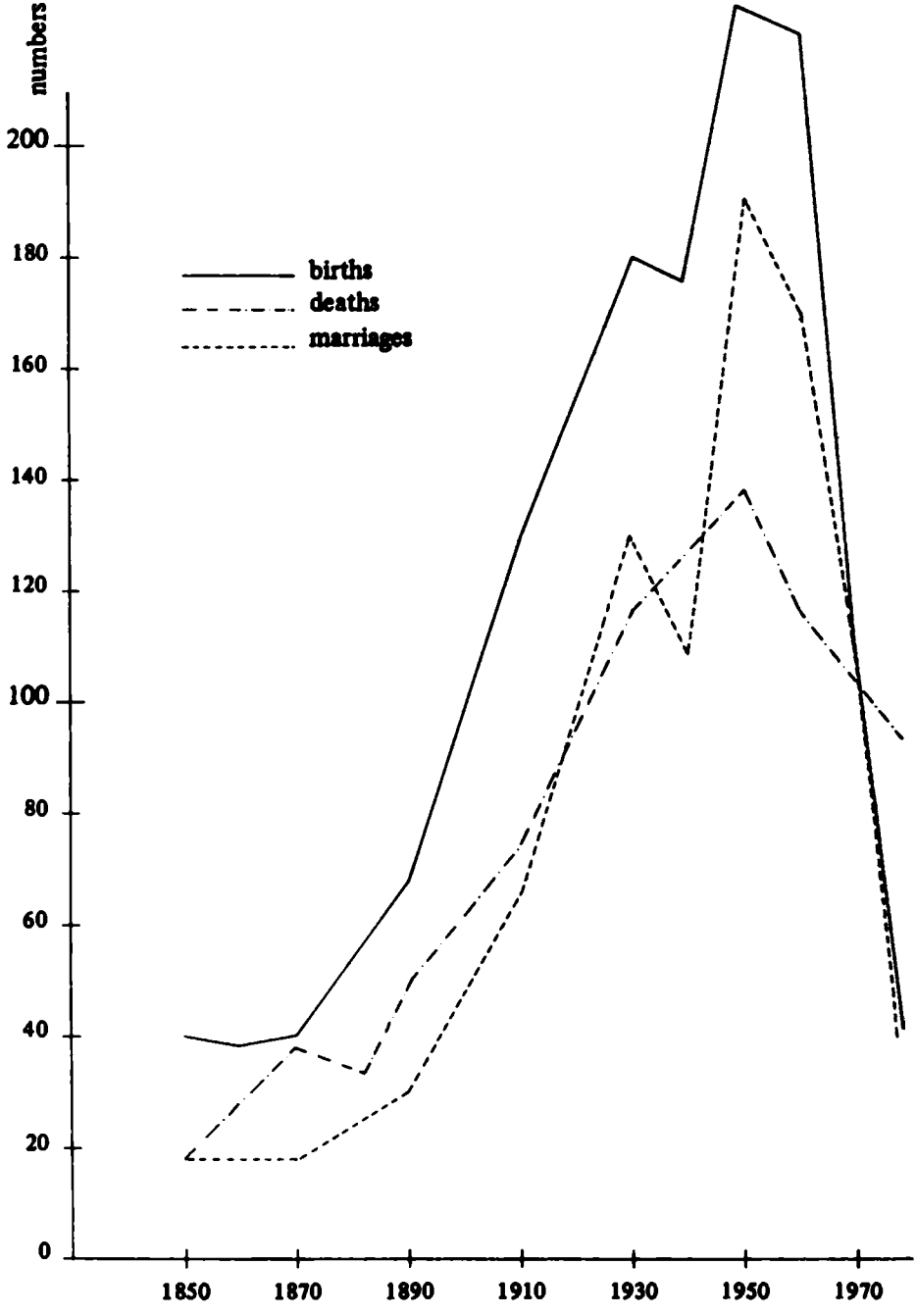
Alexandria: Maronite community



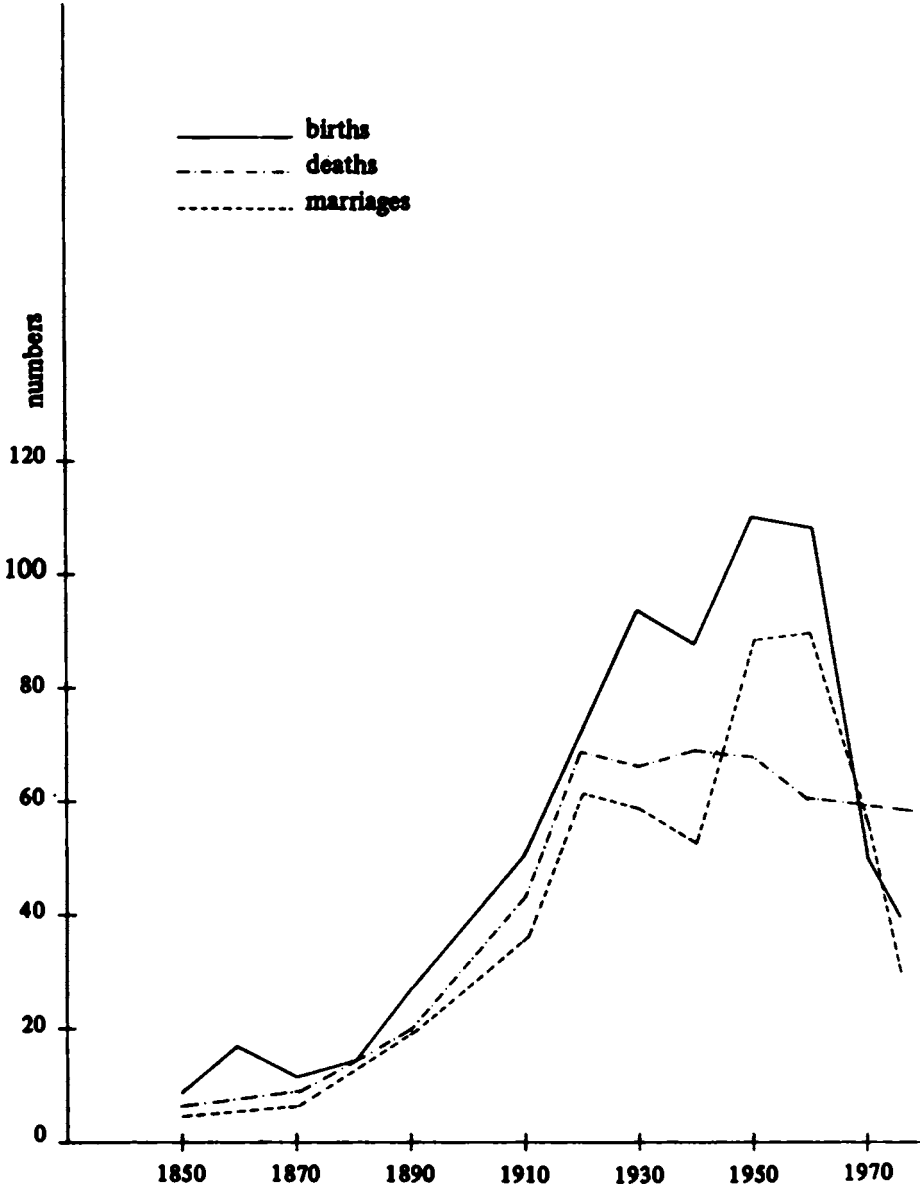
Alexandria: Greek Orthodox (Syrian) community



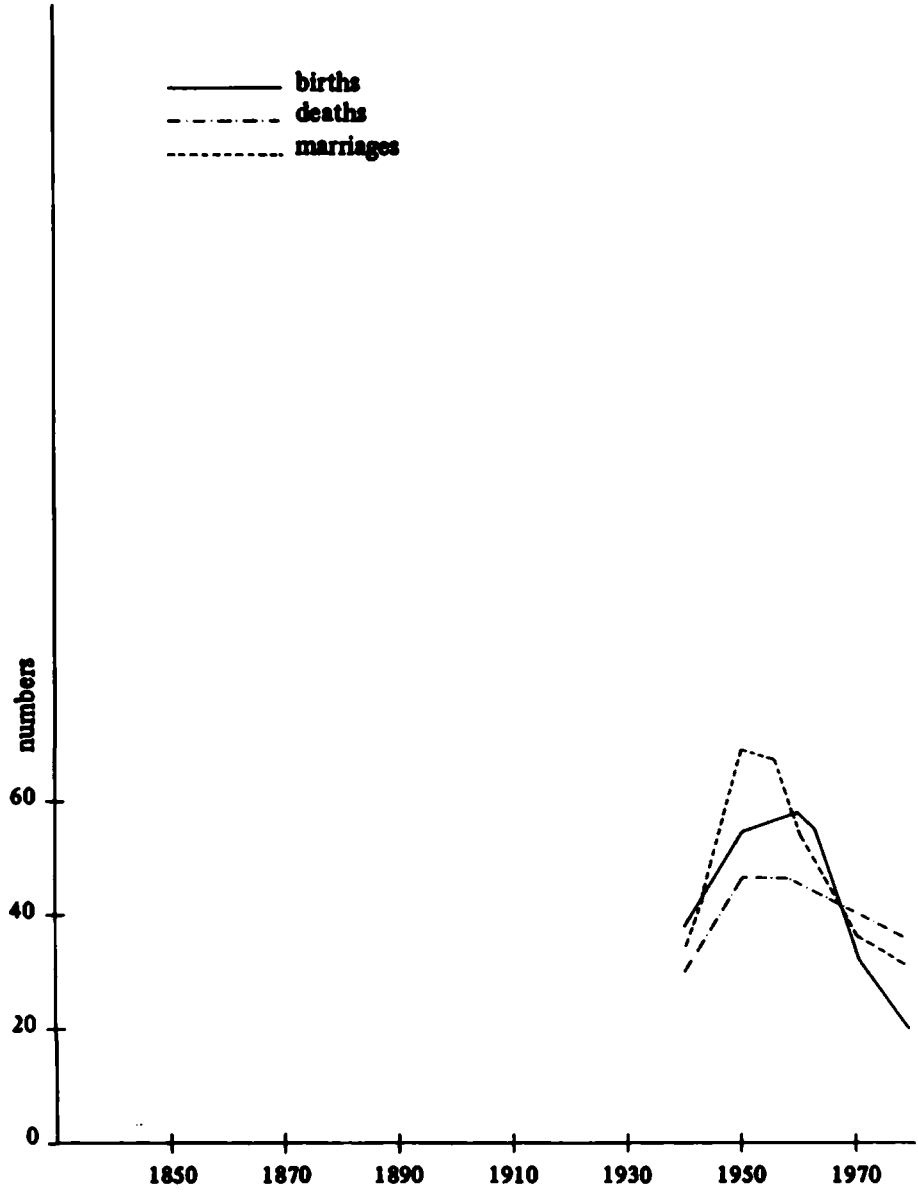
Cairo: Greek Catholic community



Cairo: Maronite community



Cairo: Greek Orthodox (Syrian) community



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